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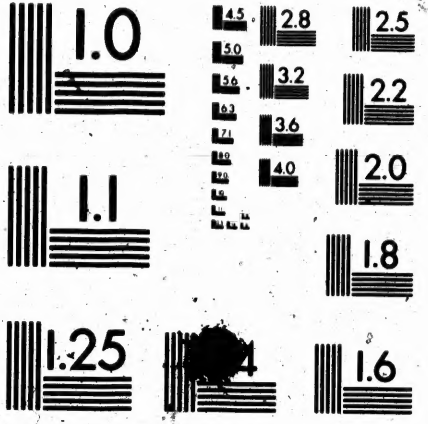


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THE

# Christian's Manual;

SELECT

## Pamphlets and Tracts.

TORONTO:
PRINTED BY LOVELL AND GIBSON
FOR
ANDREW HAMILTON.

1861.

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# ADVERTISEMENT.

MANY valuable small publications have been lost to the Church and the world. These are bound, to preserve them; and also, with the earnest desire that they may prove profitable to ALL *who are* CHRISTIANS, by clearly showing from the Word of God, the Scriptural principles illustrated.

Those who desire further to examine the subjects discussed, are referred to the able treatise by Ralph Wardlaw, entitled, "Congregational Independency in contradistinction to Episcopacy and Presbyterianism — the Church Polity of the New Testament:" and to the Essays by him and Greville Ewing, on Infant Baptism.

The Tracts on Church Order were first printed in Scotland.

The Publisher would particularly request attention to the advice given by the Author to the reader of "*The Anxious Inquirer:*"—

"DIRECTIONS FOR THE PROFITABLE READING OF THE FOLLOWING TREATISE.—Take it with you into your closet.—Read it with *deep seriousness.*—Read it *with earnest prayer.*—Do not read too much at a time.—*Meditate* on what you read.—*Read calmly.*—*I very earnestly recommend the perusal of all those passages of Scripture and chapters which I have quoted, and which, for the sake of brevity, I have only referred to, without quoting the words. I lay great stress on this.*—Read this book with *the Bible at your elbow,* and *do not think much of turning to the passages quoted.*"

# What is a Christian?

ACTS xi. 26.

"*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*"

THERE are few words which have, in their ordinary use, deviated more widely from their original application, than the term CHRISTIAN. In its original use, it was descriptive of a comparatively small number of men, who were distinguished from the rest of the world by a singular and striking peculiarity of sentiments and character. In the use that is generally made of it now, it can hardly with truth be said that it is distinctive of principles and character at all;—for it is applied indiscriminately to persons, whose principles and characters are diametrically opposite. Nay, to such a degree has it been generalized in its application, as to have become a term in geography, rather than in religion, marking out—not a distinct and defined variety of individual character,—but birth, and local residence, and national boundaries.—Great Britain is a Christian country; and its inhabitants are of course, Christians, because they are not, by profession, Pagans, or Mahometans.

It has so happened, that, of a variety of appellations, originally used to denote the same class of individuals, CHRISTIAN is the one that has been thus sadly perverted from its original and appropriate application. From this circumstance has arisen the curious fact, that the name of Christian is taken, and reciprocally given to one another, by multitudes of persons, who never for a moment dream of any of the other terms being at all applicable to them. How many, for example, would be highly provoked, should you refuse them the designation of *Christians*,

who, were you to accost them by the appellation of *saints* would either look at you, in astonishment, for an explanation of your meaning, or, perhaps, fire with the quickness of insulted pride.—Yet the truth is, that saints and Christians are terms of the same import. No man is a Christian, who is not a saint; and if there be no saints now, at this distance from primitive times, neither are there any Christians.—In confirmation of this remark, let us observe who they were who first received in Antioch, the denomination of Christians. They were the disciples: —"the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

Who were these disciples?—The context itself, without going further, will inform us.—They were persons who had been converted by the power of the grace of Christ. Some of the preachers of the word who had come to Antioch, we are informed in the 20th and 21st verses, "spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."—They were persons in whom Barnabas (verse 23.) "saw the grace of God," and whom he "exhorted, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." These were, beyond all doubt, persons of the very same description with those addressed by such various appellations in the beginnings of the apostolic epistles.—"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called, saints."—"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called, saints; with all that, in every place, call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"—"To the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:"—"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, who are at Colosse." —These were the persons who were originally denominated Christians; and whom this denomination, therefore, originally distinguished from others:—and if these various appellations and descriptions are inapplicable to us, so also must be the designation in question.

It is of immense importance that we attend to the true and proper meaning of this appellation: that is, to the meaning of it, as it is used in the Bible. For if our professed Christianity will not abide this test, what is it worth? If it will not abide this test, neither will it endure the scrutiny of the great day. According to the Scriptures, Christians are possessed of special privileges and peculiar hopes, to which he who is not a Christian has no legitimate title. These privileges and hopes are of inestimable value; and the value of them gives proportionate importance to the inquiry, whether we be Christians, in the Bible acceptation of the term. To be called Christians by fellow-men,—to be addressed indiscriminately as Christians from the pulpit, is nothing:—it will not make you what you are called. The question is not, what you are called, but what you are:—the touchstone by which this must be determined is the Word of God:—and on the answer to the inquiry depends, as to each of you, the happiness of eternity.

There are, in Scripture, some general expressions and representations, which most strikingly show, that the term *Christian*, includes in it a vast deal more than is commonly apprehended, or at all thought of, by the great majority of those among whom it is in current use. A Christian is one who has been "born again:" "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—He is made alive from a state of death: "You, being dead in your sins—hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."—He is a new creature, formed anew by the power of God: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."—He is a child of God—an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry,

Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—Such representations as these are fitted to excite "great searchings of heart" among multitudes who pass under the common national appellation of Christians. They clearly evince, that Christianity is something entirely of a *personal* nature; and that there must be a very wide difference indeed, between being a Christian, and merely being a member of a particular community, or having been either the subjects, or the observers, of any external rite.

The appellation, according to its obvious etymology, must signify some *relation* or other *to Christ*, sustained by the person who is called by it:—and the simplest and most general idea we can attach to it is, that of a follower, or adherent of Christ.

But what is implied in being a genuine adherent or follower of Christ? I answer: It implies *being a disciple of Christ, and a believer of his doctrine:—a lover of Christ:—an obedient subject and imitator of Christ:—and an expectant of Christ, or one who looks for his second coming.*

I. Being a Christian means, being A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST, and a BELIEVER OF HIS DOCTRINE:—as an Aristotelian meant a disciple of Aristotle, and a Platonist, of Plato.

To be a disciple of Christ and a believer, must surely imply something more precise and definite, than the mere conviction that *the Bible is the word of God.* Supposing the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures distinctly admitted, still, it is not the belief of this that constitutes any one a Christian,—but the belief of what *these Scriptures reveal*, and of those truths in particular which, from their nature, and from the place which they hold in these

Scriptures, it was evidently their chief purpose to make known.

It is not the belief that *Christianity is a religion from God*, that constitutes a Christian; but the faith of *Christianity itself*. This is a distinction, I conceive, too little attended to. Many a time, after perusing treatises containing evidences of the Divine authority of the Christian religion, has the inquiry forcibly impressed itself on my mind, "Of what advantage is all this to the writer, if after all, he has left the question unanswered, or wrongly answered—what the Christian religion is?"

I would further on the same principle observe, that the faith which constitutes a person a Christian, is more than the simple belief of *the Divine mission of Jesus Christ*;—to which it is by some exclusively confined. For what can avail believing that Jesus was a messenger from God, if we deny the great purpose for which he was sent, and the leading doctrines which he was commissioned, himself or by his apostles, to teach to mankind?—The same observation applies to the belief of his being *the Christ*, without Scriptural ideas being attached to the appellation, of his person and character, and work:—and also to the belief of *the facts* recorded by the sacred historians, as to his sufferings, and death, and resurrection, while the *end* for which he suffered, and died, and rose again, is openly and scornfully disavowed.

The depravity and guilt of mankind;—the Divinity, voluntary substitution, and atonement of Jesus Christ;—justification by grace, through faith, and not by works of righteousness which we have done;—and the necessity and freeness of the Holy Spirit's influences, for the conversion and final salvation of sinners;—these appear to be doctrines which constitute the very essence of Christianity; and to call by the same appellation doctrines precisely the reverse, is to impose upon ourselves by a mere name;—for our so calling them cannot alter the nature of things, nor in the slightest degree abate the real magnitude of the difference between them.

When I speak of a Christian as a believer in Christ, I mean that he is one who has been deeply convinced of his guilt, as a sinner; of the righteousness of the sentence of condemnation which has been pronounced against him; of the truth of the Scripture testimony concerning Jesus Christ, as a Divine and all-sufficient Saviour, who hath "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" and of the entire suitableness of the free salvation revealed through his atonement, to his own state, as a guilty and justly condemned creature;—and who, under an impressive consciousness that he has in himself nothing worthy to form any part of the ground of his acceptance, humbly relies on the mercy of God, through the work and merits of this Saviour alone. I have studied my Bible to no purpose, if this be not the very first principle of the Christian character.

II. The Christian is a LOVER OF CHRIST.

I mention this as a distinct particular, because it is much insisted on in the New Testament, and in such terms as clearly show it to be an essential and distinguishing characteristic.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity"—is an expression of apostolical affection for all Christians; none being, in Paul's estimation, worthy of the name, who were not animated by sincere and fervent love to the Redeemer. So far from owning as Christians those who were destitute of this sacred principle, and including them in his apostolical benediction, he loads them with a heavy curse,—a curse dictated by the Spirit of God: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha."—His language on this subject is in full harmony with that of his Divine Master: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life also,—he cannot be my disciple." Mark his words. They are most decisive:—"*he cannot be my disciple!*"—There is no sophistry so

subtle as to elude this simple and peremptory assurance. A Christian, it surely warrants us to affirm, no one can possibly be, who is not *a lover of Christ.*

Closely associated with love to the Saviour is the duty of *avowing our attachment* ;—of openly declaring our adherence to his cause.

On this subject, we have very decisive language used by our Lord himself :—"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven."—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in that of his Father, and of the holy angels."

The appellation of Christian, for the reasons formerly assigned, is not now, as it was at first, any disparagement.—But are you ashamed, permit me to ask you,—are you ashamed to be known as a believer, and abettor, of the mortifying and obnoxious doctrines of the cross,—those doctrines which the men of this world esteem foolishness?—Do you feel ashamed of the world's scorn, and of its various epithets of contemptuous reproach,—a saint, an enthusiast, a fanatic, a methodist, a well-meaning but weak-minded man? To such as act the dastardly part of denying or being ashamed of Christ, he might well say, with all the emphasis of indignant expostulation "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?"—Of one thing at least I am confident, that he who is disposed to make it a matter of inquiry with himself—"With how much secrecy, with how little distinction from the world, may I be a follower of Christ?"—has strong reason to suspect the sincerity of his attachment.

Connected with this readiness to "confess Christ," is the disposition to give to him, and to his truth and cause, the decided preference above every thing else in the world. —Observe the language of the Lord himself :—"So also,

whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple:"—and consider, that you may examine yourselves by the comparison, how this temper of mind was exemplified by the apostle of the Gentiles:—"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, even the rightousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if, by any means, I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."—Have *you*, my readers, drunk into this Spirit? Are your sentiments and feelings in unison with these? Whether has Christ or the world the chief place in the affections and desires of your hearts? What sacrifices have you made for the Redeemer? Have you ever made any? Are you willing to make any? Have you ever denied yourselves any earthly gratification, any enjoyment which the world is accustomed to pursue, from regard to his authority, from attachment to his cause, to maintain the consistency of your profession of his name, or to give you the means of diffusing his truth and advancing his glory?—Jesus says, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, cannot be my disciple." Do you know at all by experience, what is meant by "bearing the cross?"—or what Paul intends by "the offence of the cross?"—Or, have you rather met the world halfway?—and by timid compromise, and temporizing conformity, succeeded to your wish, in retaining an interest in its good graces; and in making your religion, with self-applauded prudence, admirably to comport with the approving smiles of fashion, of infidelity, and of wealth, and with the security

and advancement of your worldly interests?—Examine your hearts on this point, as in the sight of God. Have you ever seriously thought, or thought at all, of what Jesus means, when he affirms the necessity of a man's "forsaking all that he hath," in order to his being a true disciple of his? Is your attachment to the Saviour really such, that there is nothing in this world which you would not part with,—nay, that you would willingly sacrifice all that pertains to this world together,—rather than renounce his name, and forfeit an interest in his love and in his blessing?—Were Christ to put to each of you the searching question addressed by him to Simon Peter,—"LOVEST THOU ME?"—could you, without your heart giving the lie to your lips,—without the blush of conscious falsehood suffusing your cheek, reply, as he did, "Lord, thou knowest all things;—thou knowest that I love thee?"

III. The true Christian is a SUBJECT and IMITATOR OF CHRIST.

We may be confidently assured, that no man has any interest in Christ as a Saviour, who is not subject to him as a Lord;—who does not practically evince his desire to yield unreserved and impartial obedience to his precepts; "esteeming all his commandments concerning all things to be right, and hating every false way." The very first question of the renewed mind, alive to the claims of gratitude for redeeming and quickening grace, is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—Of this willing obedience, the love illustrated under last particular, is the inward principle, and impelling spring. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died; and that he died for all, that we who live should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again."—This language of an inspired apostle, accords with that of the Lord himself: "If ye love me keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he

it is that loveth me :—If a man love me, he will keep my words :—He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings."—Let a man's professed creed, then, be ever so pure,—if he does not add to the profession of faith, the fruits of practical godliness, he is not a Christian ;—for, in truth, he is not a believer of what he professes.

Some men are, by profession, staunch and thorough Calvinists ;—rigid sticklers for every iota of the system ;—yet, if you look to their characters, you can discover nothing like the genuine influence of Divine truth. Their whole deportment, on the contrary, shows them to be "men of the world," unrenewed in the spirit of their minds. Their pretended faith is without works, and is "dead, being alone." They "have a form of godliness, but are destitute of its power." "They profess that they know God ; but in works they deny him." They betray the Son of Man with a kiss ; and he will say to them at last, "Depart from me ; I know you not, all ye workers of iniquity."—These, indeed, are the very worst of characters ;—false friends ;—traitors in the camp ;—whose profession of attachment is inconceivably more dishonouring to the Saviour, and more deeply injurious to his cause, than avowed and virulent infidelity. —"The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

If we are *Christians indeed*, we must *resemble Christ*.—We must resemble him, first of all, in piety towards God. This will display its sacred influence, in the choice of God himself as the portion of our inheritance, and of our cup. —"Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee : my flesh and my heart fail ; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever :"—in desire after communion with him, in the closet, in the family, and in the sanctuary : —in supreme regard to his authority, as the rule of all

our conduct, in opposition to the "will of the flesh," and to the "doctrines and commandments of men,"—in keeping our eye simply and uniformly directed to his glory, as the great end at which all his creatures ought habitually to aim;—in practical zeal for his cause and honour in the world:—and in humble and cheerful submission to his will, under all the trying appointments of his providence.—We must resemble him also in personal sobriety and purity, in all the various departments of these virtues; and in spirituality of mind, and holy superiority to the vanities of time. We must be like him, too, in the practice of all social virtues,—justice and integrity, sincerity and truth, humility, meekness, long-suffering and forgiveness,—the various affections and corresponding duties arising from the different relations of life,—and universal benevolence to mankind, evinced in beneficent, disinterested, and self-denying exertions to promote their welfare;—their welfare both in body and in soul;—their temporal, spiritual, and eternal interests.

Every one who deserves the name of Christian, is "feelingly alive" to whatever concerns the glory of God his Saviour, and the salvation of his fellow-men, by which that glory is principally advanced:—and to all who partake this holy sensibility, there cannot be a prospect more full of animating delight than this. He who can witness, without lively emotion, the diffusion of God's "saving health," and the conversion to Christ, of sinners of every kindred, and tribe, and tongue, and nation, has good cause to doubt whether he possesses a spark of that sacred fire which glowed in the bosoms of the early Christians. He wants the characteristic affections of a child of God. He wants the spirit of heaven,—is not of one mind with its blessed inhabitants;—for "there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." I know few things, indeed, which afford a more correct standard, by which to estimate the state of religion in the heart of any one of its professors, than the degree of interest

which he feels and manifests, about the spread of the gospel, and the success attending it in its progress. Can *he*, think you, have felt the misery of his own guilt and lost condition, who feels little or no concern about the spiritual degradation and wretchedness of his fellow-sinners ?—Can he have felt the incalculable preciousness of his own soul, who is indifferent and uninterested about the salvation of the souls of others ?—Can he have felt his infinite obligations to "the Lord that bought him," whose heart is a stranger to any concern about the Redeemer's glory, —a stranger to the desire that he may "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," and to that kindred joy which springs up in the renewed mind, when this desire is gratified ?

Examine your profession of Christianity by this, and by the other practical tests that have been laid before you.—There may be, and very often is, a great deal of external virtue, where there is no genuine inward principle ;—the shadow without the substance ;—the inanimate body, without the breath, and the living soul. But, on the other hand, where there is not the outward practice of virtue, and (to use a term less familiar in the world, but which means virtue sanctified by piety,—without which, indeed, virtue is a mere name)—where there is not the external performance of the duties of holiness all profession is worse than vain :—it is a provoking insult, and an impious mockery, of that Divine Master whose name is so falsely or so thoughtlessly assumed.

It is true, that the Christian is deeply conscious to himself of much failure, and of universal deficiency. Yet the grand features of resemblance are marked and visible :—he is sincerely and earnestly desirous of increasing conformity :—he studies the perfect example with growing delight :—and "beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as the Spirit of the Lord."

IV. The Christian is an EXPECTANT OF CHRIST; ONE WHO LOOKS FOR HIS SECOND APPEARANCE.—He is distinguished by his *hopes*, as well as by his principles, and by his character.

That Christ will come, to raise the dead, and to judge the world, to bless his faithful people with complete salvation, and to execute on his enemies the vengeance due to their impenitent rebellion,—the Scriptures do most plainly testify. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also:"—"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall first rise;—then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."—"He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!"—The spirit breathed in this holy aspiration, is to be found, although in very unequal degrees, in every faithful follower of the Redeemer.—There is included in it, a firm belief that he will come:—Glad anticipation of the event:—Habitual preparation for its approach:—and patient expectation of it.

This hope, from its very nature, possesses a sanctifying influence:—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him (that is in Christ) purifieth himself even as he is pure."—It cannot fail to be so, from the nature of the thing. That which we *hope for* we *desire*;—and that which we *desire*, we *pursue*. Likeness to Christ, and the felicity thence resulting, cannot be the object of hope,

without being the object of desire, nor can it be the object of desire, without being the object of present pursuit. So that every one who really has hope in Christ,—that is, whose hope has not only Christ for its foundation, but complete conformity to Christ in the perfection of holiness for its object, will infallibly "purify himself even as he is pure." To the man who does not thus purify himself, holy conformity to Christ cannot be the object of hope; for if it were, he would *like it*, as no man can be said to hope for what he does not like:—and if he liked it, he would show this by now seeking after its attainment. The object of such a man's hope, if he has formed in his mind any definite notion of it at all, must be something essentially different.

The ground of this hope, which has just been alluded to, is no less distinctive of the Christian than the hope itself.—In looking forward to the second coming of his Lord, his hope of acceptance and of eternal life, rests on that work which he finished at his first coming;—or the atonement made by the blood of his cross.—Convinced that there is only one spot on the face of this earth, from which a guilty creature, whose mind is properly impressed with the holiness of God and the evil of sin, can view the solemnities of an approaching judgment without dismay, the Christian transports himself in faith to the heights of Calvary;—takes his station there at the foot of the cross,—and, clinging to the sacred tree on which his Divine Redeemer finished the expiation for sin, surveys, with steady eye, the overwhelming scene.—The heavens open,—not in tranquil serenity, as when, on the banks of the Jordan, the spirit of peace alighted on the Son of God, to consecrate him to his office,—but rending and rolling away, with a mighty noise:—he beholds the descending Judge, revealed in effulgent glory, and "all his holy angels with him," "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands:"—he hears "the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God," "louder than a

thousand thunders :"—he sees the great white throne erected ;—the millions of the dead starting to life, and gathering before the dread tribunal,—while "from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, the heavens and the earth flee away, and no place is found for them ;"—"the judgment set, and the books opened ;"—the whole race of mankind assembled on the right hand, and on the left,—all waiting their respective dooms, with joyful hope, and trembling apprehension !—With the eye of prophetic faith, he beholds all this,—and with deep solemnity of spirit he anticipates his own appearance at the bar of judgment. Conscious of unworthiness and guilt, and impressed with holy awe in contemplating the purity and the majesty of the Judge, and the inconceivable magnitude of the results of that "great and dreadful day of the Lord," —he breathes with humble fervour and prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinner !"—"If thou, Lord shouldst mark iniquity, who, O Lord, should stand ?"—"Enter not into judgment with thy servant ; for in thy sight no flesh living can be justified."—But his supplications are not the language of despair. He has hope,—"good hope through grace." Did he look only to the throne indeed, —only to the judgment-seat, with all its attendent solemnities,—his heart would fail him ;—but, looking alternately to the Throne and to the Cross, the view of the one takes away the terror of the other. He who occupies the throne of judgment, is the same who "bore the sins of his people in his own body on the tree." The SAVIOUR is the JUDGE. The remembrance of this re-assures his spirit, and animates him with the confidence of hope :—"There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared :"—"Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage, who retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy :"—"Lo this is my God ; I have waited for him, and he will save me : this is the Lord ; I have waited for him, I will be glad and rejoice in his salvation :"

"Not in mine innocence I trust,
"I bow before thee in the dust,
"And through my Saviour's blood alone,
"I look for mercy at thy throne."

In this world, Christians are mingled, in human society, with hypocrites, unbelievers, and wicked men. The tares and the wheat grow together until the harvest. But the time is coming, my friends, when there shall be a universal development of character, and a complete and eternal separation of the precious and the vile. The "multitude which no one can number, collected out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, shall stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, singing with a loud voice, Salvation to our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb!"—In that vast assembly, there shall be no mixture of character,—no discordance of sentiment or of feeling. The Divine Redeemer, having "gathered out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity," shall "receive the people to himself, that where he is, there they may be also:"—and all shall be sincerity—all love, and peace, and purity, and joy!—"Who are these who are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?—These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water:— and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS, TORONTO.

A

# CATECHISM

ON THE

# CONSTITUTION AND ORDINANCES

OF THE

# Kingdom of Christ.

BY THE


## REV. WILLIAM ORME,

*Of Camberwell, London;*

LATE FOREIGN SECRETARY TO THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY, AUTHOR OF BIBLIOTHECA BIBLICA, THE LIFE OF DR. OWEN, AND THE LIFE OF REV. RICHARD BAXTER.



Second Canadian, from the Fifth English Edition, enlarged.


"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."—Rev. ii.


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# ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

*FOURTH EDITION.*

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*Perth, Sep.* 1, 1821.

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# A CATECHISM

ON THE

# KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

## SECTION I.

### OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

1. *Question.* WHAT is the only pure source of religious knowledge, and the only infallible standard of belief and practice?

*Answer.* The revelation which God has been pleased to give us in the Holy Scriptures. All other sources of religious knowledge are imperfect, uncertain, and unsatisfactory, on account of the weakness and corruption of human nature; and all other standards of faith and duty are assumed, imperfect, and destitute of authority.

2. Q. On what grounds are the sacred Scriptures believed to be a revelation from God?

A. Because they assert their divine inspiration, of the truth of which we are furnished with the most satisfactory evidence, both internal and external: 2 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. i. 11; 2 Pet. i. 21; iii. 15, 16.

3. Q. What is the principal design of the word of God?

A. To make men wise unto salvation: 2 Tim. iii. 15.

4. Q. How are the Scriptures fitted to accomplish this design?

A. By the views which they give of the character of God, and of the present state of human nature; the history which they contain of the divine dispensations of mercy and judgment; and the plan which they unfold of redemption through Jesus Christ.

5. Q. How are the Scriptures divided?

A. Into those of the Old and New Testaments, or Covenants.

6. Q. What are the principal subjects of the Scriptures of the Old Testament?

A. The history of the church before the coming of the Messiah; the promises and predictions which supported its faith and hope, relating to his undertaking and kingdom; the institutions which it observed, and the laws by which it was governed.

7. Q. What parts of the Old Testament are Christians bound to observe?

A. All, except those things which are directly, or by implication, abrogated in the New Testament.

8. Q. Are the *constitution* and *ordinances* of the law by Moses, among the things that are abolished?

A. Yes: because that peculiar constitution was designed to answer a local and temporary purpose, and was neither fitted nor intended to be a universal or perpetual dispensation. The ordinances were suited to its nature—carnal, showy, and typical; and all of them are expressly declared to be now done away: 2 Cor. iii; Gal. iii. and iv; Heb. vii. viii. ix. and x. chapters.

9. Q. What do the Scriptures of the New Testament chiefly contain?

A. A full account of the doctrines, constitution, ordinances, laws, and prospects, of the kingdom of Christ.

## SECTION II.

### OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES.

10. Q. To whom did the Lord Jesus commit the power of declaring what were to be the laws of his kingdom?

A. To his servants the apostles, whom he supernaturally qualified for this important work: Matt. xvi. 19. xviii. 18. xix. 28; John, xx. 23.

11. Q. Are all Christians bound implicitly and fully to follow their injunctions?

A. Yes; as seems plain from the extraordinary authority with which they were invested, and the language which they addressed to the people of God: Matt. xxviii. 18–20;

20. Q. Do they not express their disapprobation of the smallest changes that were introduced into the churches without their authority?

A. Yes:

If any man seem to be contentious, we have no *such custom* (as women praying with their heads uncovered) *neither the Churches of God:* 1 Cor. xi. 16.

21. Q. Do not all these things show, that one general practice prevailed at the beginning, and that we are not at liberty to deviate in any respect from that practice?

A. Yes:

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge, that the things which I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant: 1 Cor. xiv. 37, 38.

22. Q. Have the apostles any successors?

A. No. In a table commonly printed along with our bibles, it is said, that "bishops are successors of the apostles, in the government of the church;" but this is one of those "notes or comments," which are not only without authority, but absolutely erroneous. The apostles have no successors, or, if they had, bishops have no warrant to assume an office, which from the beginning was altogether distinct from theirs.

23. Q. Is there no power then possessed by the church, of altering or modifying the laws of the kingdom of Christ?

A. There is no hint in Scripture, that a power of this kind is now possessed by any description of men whatever. Where the laws of Christ interfere, no power on earth can dispense with their obligation; where they do not, no human authority has a right to demand obedience.

24. Q. Does not this view of the authority and obligation of apostolical precept and example, afford ground to hope, that the people of God will finally be all of one mind in the things which concern his kingdom?

A. Yes; for as they are all furnished with one rule, all taught by one Spirit, all enjoined to acknowledge only

one authority, and as Jesus prayed for this universal *visible* unity, unity must be the final result.

Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven: Matt. xxiii. 8, 9; Isa. lii. 8; Jer. vi. 16; John, xvii. 20, 21; Eph. iv. 4, 6.

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## SECTION III.

### OF THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, AND ITS CORRUPTION.

25. Q. What general view does the New Testament give of the nature of the kingdom of Christ?

A. That it is not of this world:

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence: John, xviii. 36.

26. Q. What is implied in its not being of this world?

A. That it does not resemble in its chief characters the kingdoms or governments of the earth.

1st, Because it is not of worldly origin:

In the days of these kings shall *the God of heaven set up a kingdom*, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever: Dan. ii. 44.

2d, Because it does not consist of worldly men:

Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God:* John, iii. 5.

3d, Because it is not governed by worldly principles:

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; *but it shall not be so among you:* Matt. xx. 25, 26.

4th, And because it is not supported or promoted by worldly measures:

For the weapons of our warfare *are not carnal*, but mighty

through God to the pulling down of strong holds, 2 Cor. x. 4: Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice: John, xviii. 37.

27. Q. Did not corruption in its principles, constitution, and worship, begin to operate very early?

A. It began even in the days of the apostles:

The mystery of iniquity is *already* working: 2 Thess. ii. 7. *Even now are there many antichrists:* 1 John, ii. 18.

28. Q. Who were the principal instruments in promoting this corruption?

A. False teachers, who crept into the churches under various pretences; but who were influenced chiefly by covetousness, licentiousness, and ambition:

I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock: Acts, xx. 29.

Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not: 3 John, 9.

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you; whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not: 2 Peter, ii. 1–3.

29. Q. At what period in the progress of this corruption was an actual alliance formed between the kingdom of Christ and the world?

A. In the beginning of the fourth century, when the Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the religion of the Roman empire; bestowed peculiar privileges on its professors, rich benefices on its bishops, and abolished by penal laws, and active persecution, all observance of heathen worship; which procured external and insincere conformity to his views of Christianity.

30. Q. Are this alliance, and its effect on Christianity, predicted in Scripture?

A. Yes:

And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his (*own*) time; For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth (hindereth) will let,

until he (*it*) be taken out of the way, and then shall that WICKED (*one*) be revealed: 2 Thess. ii. 1–12.

*i. e.* So long as the government of the Roman empire remained heathen, it retarded the progress of the man of sin; but as soon as it became nominally Christian, the obstruction to his full manifestation was removed, and his abominations were spread abroad with accelerated rapidity, and with little disguise.

31. Q. Does Christ's kingdom admit of such an alliance or incorporation with earthly kingdoms, or of being regulated by their maxims or laws?

A. No: not without compromising the prerogative of Christ, as sole lawgiver in his church; sacrificing its purity to worldly interests, and prostituting its privileges to ungodly men.

32. Q. These are general reasons; I wish you to state your objections to this alliance more particularly.

1st, I object to it, then, because it is totally destitute of the sanction of Scripture authority: not a single passage of the New Testament, can be brought in its support. It was utterly unknown in the apostolic age, and for three centuries afterwards.

2d, Because the reasonings adduced in its support, from the constitution of the kingdom of Israel, are opposed to the declarations of Jesus and the apostles, respecting the entire abrogation of that peculiar economy; to their express prohibition of returning to its elements; and would, if followed out, lead to consequences which no Christian could defend: Heb. vii. 12, 18, 19; Gal. iv. 9–11.

3d, Because it is referred to in the prophecies of Scripture, only as a corruption, as a commission of fornication with the kings of the earth, and as placing the people of God in a state of captivity and bondage. It is one of the great pillars of that system, which is denominated, a mystery of iniquity, the man of sin, the son of perdition, antichrist, Babylon, the mother of harlots, &c. See many parts of the book of Revelation, from the 6th to the 21st chapters.

33. Q. Will you explain some of this language? Why is it a corruption?

A. For the reasons assigned in the answer to the 31st question.

34. Q. How do you consider it a commission of fornication?

A. Because it is an unlawful connection of the church, which is called the Lamb's wife, with a rival to his authority, and in her affections. It is language borrowed from the descriptions in the Old Testament of the idolatrous alliances formed by the people of Israel.

35. Q. How does it place the people of God in a state of captivity and bondage?

A. Because it requires them to acknowledge another authority in Christ's kingdom than his own, and deprives them of some of the rights and privileges which he has conferred; as will be stated afterwards.

36. Q. How is it a main pillar of the system above referred to?

A. Because if the temporal support of the kingdoms of the world were withdrawn, the whole system of antichristian delusion would be reduced to ruin, or become much more harmless than it has ever been.

37. Q. Why is this system called a mystery of iniquity?

A. Because it long wrought in secret, before it was fully manifested; and because by secret measures and deceit, it ever has been, and still is maintained: 2 Thess. ii. 10.

38. Q. Why is it called the man of sin?

A. To denote its entire abomination, and to intimate its progressive advancement and decay; or because the corrupt bishops of Rome have carried the apostacy from primitive christianity to the greatest extent of wickedness.

39. Q. Why is it called the son of perdition?

A. Because it is devoted to destruction: 2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xviii. 8.

40. Q. Why is it called antichrist?

A. On account of its opposition to the will and glory of Christ.

41. Q. Why is it called Babylon the great?

A. Because, like ancient Babylon, by which it was prefigured, it is the oppressor and persecutor of the people of God: Rev. xvii. 6.

42. Q. Why is it called the mother of harlots and abominations?

A. On account of the numerous brood, and the various abominations that spring from it.

43. Q. Will you state your other reasons for objecting to the alliance?

4th, A. I object to it, because it makes a political distinction among men on account of their religious sentiments; because it has been the source of most of the persecutions and intolerance which have been practised under the Christian name; because in its very nature it produces evil, and prevents obedience to many parts of the will of Christ, viz.:

1. It destroys the discipline of Christ's kingdom, and violates his law, by rendering it impracticable to separate the precious from the vile; and confounds the distinction between the church and the world, the holy and profane: Jer. xv. 19; Ezek. xxii. 26.

2. It deprives the people of God of their undoubted right to choose their own pastors and teachers.

3. It sets aside the necessity and the duty of those who are taught, to support those who teach, agreeably to the appointment of Christ; and raises provision for public teachers, by means which the law of Christ utterly disowns: Gal. vi. 6.

4. It often prevents reformation of evil, and retards the progress of truth, as no change can be made in a community so incorporated, without the concurrence of the civil power, which is never easily obtained.

5. By the honours and emoluments which it provides and secures, a great temptation is held out to men destitute of religion, to enter into its ministry; and thus it becomes instrumental in promoting error and hypocrisy.

44. Q. In what state was the kingdom of Christ before it was patronised by the civil powers?

A. It subsisted in the midst of opposition; extended itself in the world, through the blessing of God on its own resources and exertions; and overcame every obstacle, by the faith, patience, and purity of its subjects.

45. What was its state after it became the established religion?

A. It increased in wealth, splendour, superstition, and immorality, till from being persecuted and oppressed, it became the persecutor and oppressor of others.

46. Q. Did any change take place in the alliance of the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world, at the Reformation?

A. No; for although the authority of the Pope was abrogated, and various useful and important changes were introduced into all the Protestant states, the civil incorporation of Chistianity with them, and the principles which led to it, remained unaltered.

47. Q. How do you account for this?

A. The reformers though great, were imperfect men, and just emerged from gross darkness; so that we may rather wonder at what they came to know, than at how much they were ignorant of. Their opinions on many subjects were unavoidably influenced by their previous circumstances. They were too much occupied in exposing corruptions of doctrines and ordinances, to attend to the main source whence these corruptions flowed; and they were not sufficiently aware, that all true and acceptable religion must be the effect of conviction and free choice produced by divine influence.

48. Q. What is the duty of the people of God, who may be found in connection with such institutions?

A. To come out of them, and to associate together according to the principles and example of the apostles and primitive Christians.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel (unbeliever); and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?—wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; 2 Cor. vi. 14–17.

49. Q. How does this passage apply to the subject?

A. By prohibiting in the strongest and most explicit manner, all improper connections with unbelievers, and all union with them in the observances of a false religion, or by an admission of them to participate with Christians in the ordinances of the New Testament. According to the language of the apostle, all such unions are *unnatural*, inconsistent with fellowship with God, with regard to the souls of others, with consistency in the Christian profession, and with regard to our own safety and comfort. See also 2 Tim. iii. 1–5; Rev. xii. 4, 5.

## SECTION IV.

### OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

50. Q. Who have a *right* to the privileges of church fellowship?

A. Those only who are regenerated by the Spirit of God, through the saving belief of the truth:

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven: John, iii. 3; Matt. xviii. 3; 1 Cor. iii. 12–17.

51. Q. Ought any to be admitted into a Christian church, but those who are judged, on proper evidence, to be of this description?

A. No: 1st, because in the above passages and others, the Saviour expressly limits the privileges of his kingdom to such.

2nd, Such only can enjoy its blessings and its privileges, or perform its duties, which are all of a spiritual nature?

3rd, Only such were received into the primitive churches:

Then they that *gladly received his word* were baptised; and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be (*were*) *saved:* Acts, ii. 41–47; and Acts, ix. 26–28.

4th, And because the epistles to churches are uniformly addressed to them as consisting of *saints*, *faithful* and *beloved* brethren:

To all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Rom. i. 7. To the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints: 1 Cor. i. 3, &c.

52. Q. Does this require that we should judge the hearts of men?

A. No: it only requires that we judge of the soundness of their profession by their words, and of its sincerity by their conduct. If they speak and act as Chris-

tians, we are bound to believe that they are Christians: Matt. vii. 16–20; Rom. xiv. 1.

53. Q. Does the parable of the tares, Matt. xiii. 24–30, teach, that the righteous and the wicked ought to be permitted to mingle together in church fellowship?

A. No: the parable does not refer to Christian fellowship at all; as plainly appears from the Saviour's explanation of it, who expressly says, ver. 38, "the field is the *world*;" which indeed, in ver. 41, he also denominates "his kingdom," in a different sense, viz. because he is the soveriegn proprietor and ruler of this world as well as of his spiritual kingdom: Matt. xxviii. 18; Psal. xxiv. 1; Dan. iv. 32–35. The leading design of this parable is, to prohibit the infliction of temporal punishments on hypocrites and unbelievers: see ver. 28–30.

54. Q. Do not wicked persons seem to have been in some of the primitive churches: Rom. xvi. 17, 18; 1 Cor. v. 1, 2; 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21?

A. Yes: false brethren crept into them unawares; and some of the people of Christ themselves fell into grievous sins, as may happen again in any such society. But the churches were most solemnly enjoined by the apostles to bring such persons to repentance, or to put them away: 1 Cor. v. 2. 13; Gal. v. 9–12; see also the epistles to the seven churches of Asia, Rev. ii. and iii.

55. Q. Ought a society to be acknowledged as a Christian church, which tolerates in its fellowship those who do not appear to believe the gospel, or who live impenitent in known sin, although it professes this to be wrong?

A. No: because the first principle of Christian fellowship is thereby destroyed; and in such a society it must be impracticable to obey some of the plain laws of Christ: 1 Cor. xv. 33, 34; 2 Cor. vi. 14–16; Eph. v. 11.

56. Q. What are the means which Christ has appointed for gathering in his people?

A. The preaching of the gospel, and the circulation of the Scriptures: Rom. x. 14, 15; xvi. 25, 26.

57. Q. Who have a right to preach the gospel?

A. Every man who knows and believes it, and is suitably qualified for making it known; which must be judged of by others, and not merely by himself, except in extraordinary circumstances: Acts, viii. 4; xi. 19–21; 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

58. Q. Is a Christian church bound to use all the means in its power, to spread the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ around it, and in all the world?

A. Yes: by united and persevering exertions for the good of fellow creatures; by improving the talents, encouraging the zeal of brethren, and defraying their necessary expenses; and in every other way which Christianity sanctions, and the law of love requires: Phil. i. 27; 1 Thess. i. 7, 8; 3 John, 5. 8.

59. Q. What does Christ require of those who believe the gospel?

A. To observe all things, both in their individual and associated capacity, which he authorised his apostles to teach and enjoin on them: Matt. xxviii. 18–20.

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## SECTION V.

### ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH.

60. Q. Is there reason to believe, that the New Testament contains sufficient information respecting that government to which Christ intends his people universally to be subject?

A. Yes; it would seem strange and unaccountable, if the Head of the church should give his people full information on every other thing in his kingdom, and leave the administration of it to the ever-varying opinions of fallible men.

61. Q. Do not all bodies of professing Christians, profess and endeavour to find the foundation and outline at least, of their form of church government in Scripture?

A. Yes; which shows the sense generally entertained of the importance and necessity of its sanction.

62. Q. Had our Lord intended to exhibit a model for universal imitation, would it not have been more plainly and connectedly revealed?

A. We have no more right to expect this, than that all the doctrines and precepts of Christianity should be digested into systematic order. It has not seemed meet to God, to reveal any part of his will to us in this manner; and it is enough, if, by diligent examination of the

word of God, and prayer for divine direction, we are able to ascertain the nature and particulars of that order which Christ has appointed for his churches. What the first churches were and did, is perfectly plain to every mind not influenced by prejudice.

63. Q. What appears to be the scriptural form of church government?

A. What is called the Congregational or Independent.

64. Q. What is meant by Congregational church government?

A. That every Christian congregation, with its office-bearers, is complete within itself, for the observance of divine ordinances, and the exercise of discipline, and is subject to no other authority or tribunal on earth.

65. Q. Why is it called Independency?

A. To distinguish it from Episcopacy, or the government of a bishop over many churches, on the one hand; and from Presbyterianism, or the government of assembled clergymen and other office-bearers, distinct from the people, on the other; and from every form which is dependent on the authority or establishment of civil government.

66. Q. What are the grounds on which it is believed, that this was the primitive, and ought to be the permanent, form of church government?

A. 1st, The word *church*, unless when applied to the whole body of believers in heaven and earth, invariably signifies a *congregation* or assembly meeting in one place; and when more than one congregation is intended, it is always in the plural *churches:* Acts, ii. 47, ix. 31; 1 Cor. i. 1; Gal. i. 2; Rev. i. 11.

The visible church of Christ is a *congregation of faithful men: Art.* 19 *of the Church of England.*

Wheresoever, then, these former notes (marks) are seen, and of any time continue (be the members ever so few, about two or three,) there, without all doubt, is the true church of Christ; not that universal, of which we have before spoken, but particular, such as were in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, and other places, wherein the ministry was planted by Paul, and were of himself named the *churches* of God: *Old Scots Confession of Faith,* (1560.)

In any intermediate sense, between a single congregation, and the whole community of Christians, not one instance can be brought of the application of the word in sacred writ.—

The plural number is invariably used when more congregations than one are spoken of, unless the subject be of the whole commonwealth of Christ.—It is the constant usage of the term also in the writings of ecclesiastical authors for the two first centuries. *Campbell's Lect. on Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 204.

2nd, In our Lord's rule respecting offences, Matt. xviii. 15–17, every offence which cannot be otherwise removed, is to be told to the church or congregation to which the parties belong, *from the decision of which his law admits of no appeal:*

If he still remains obstinate, his offence is to be told to the church, *or the particular congregation of the faithful* to which he belongs: *Macknight's Harmony.*

67. Q. May not the word church in this passage, signify *the rulers*, or *office-bearers*, or *representatives* of the church?

I reply to this question, by quoting the words of Dr. Campbell: If any one is not satisfied, that the body to which the offence is to be told, is the *congregation* of which the offender is a member, I would recommend it to him, without the aid of any commentator on either side of the question, but with the help of proper concordances, attentively to search the Scriptures; let him examine every passage in the New Testament, wherein the word we render *church* is to be found; let him canvass in the writings of the Old Testament, every sentence wherein the correspondent word occurs; and if he find *a single passage, wherein it clearly means either the priesthood or the rulers of the nation, or any thing that can be called a church representative*, let him fairly admit the distinction as scriptural and proper; otherwise, he cannot admit it in a consistency with any just rule of interpretation: *Dr. Campbell's Lect. Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 376.

3d, The most important parts of Christian discipline, are enjoined as the duty of the whole church; such as,

1. The receiving of members:

Him that is weak in the faith receive *ye*, but not to doubtful disputations: Rom. xiv. 1, compared with i. and 7.

2. Dealing with offenders:

Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, *ye who are spiritual* restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: Gal. vi. 1, compared with ch. i. and 2.

3. Excluding the Impenitent:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when *ye are gathered together*, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus: 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.

4. Restoring those who repent:

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was *inflicted by many;* and, therefore, I beseech you that ye would confirm your love towards him: 2 Cor. ii. 6–3.

4th, Not a single passage of the New Testament enjoins or exemplifies any thing like appeal for the redress of evil, to church courts; or invests meetings of representatives with any authority; or recommends submission to them, or justifies the principle upon which they are constructed—which is obedience to the laws of Christ, by *delegation* or *proxy*.

5th, The New Testament contains no *names* for any other meetings for church management, far less any directions for the regulation of their proceedings. Both in name and practice, they are entirely of human invention.

It was only in the second century that the custom of holding councils commenced in Greece, from whence it soon spread through the other provinces: *Mosheim's Ch. Hist.* vol. i. p. 107.

6th, It is the only form of government suited to the universal nature of Christ's kingdom, as it *must* be acted on in all countries at the first introduction of Christianity into them; and the only one which *can* be acted upon in all countries, ages, and circumstances.

7th, It is the only form of church government which admits of *entire liberty of conscience*, both towards those who are within, and those who are without; and which can never be incorporated with a worldly kingdom, but at the expense of its fundamental and essential principles.

Of all Christian sects, this (the Independents) was the first which, during its prosperity, as well as its adversity, always adopted the principles of toleration: *Hume's Hist. of Eng.* vol. 11—14.

8th, That the churches must have been independent in the apostolic age, is evident from their wide dispersion; from the difficulty of frequent intercourse in their circumstances; and from no traces existing in Scripture, of their regular or systematic combination.

9th, According to the testimony of the most impartial church historians, and theological writers, many of whom condemn by it, their own practice, Independency was the constitution of all the primitive societies.

The churches in those early times were entirely independent; none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but every one governed by its own rulers, and its own laws: *Mosheim's Ch. Hist.* vol. i. p. 107.

The different congregations, with their ministers, seemed in a great measure independent of one another. Every thing regarding their own procedure in worship, as well as discipline, was settled among themselves: *Campbell's Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 278.

Every church in the time of Cyprian, (about A. D. 250), was in this sense independent; that is, without the concurrence and and authority of any other church, it had a sufficient right and power in itself, to punish and chastise all its offending members: *Lord King's Inquiry into the Constitution and Discipline of the Primitive Church*, p. 138.

Independency, 'tis no question, is agreeable to the primitive times, *before the emperor became Christian: Selden's Table Talk.*

In no approved writer, for the space of 200 years after Christ, is there any mention made of any other organical, visibly professing church, but that only which is congregational: *Dr. Owen's Nature of Evangelical Churches*, p. 82.

The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire, were united only by the ties of faith and charity. *Independence, and equality* formed the basis of their internal constitution. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic; and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse by letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly. *Towards the end of the 2nd century*, the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods: *Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

68. Q. Were there not more congregations than one in Jerusalem, where the disciples were very numerous,

while, as united in some common form of government, they were denominated the *church*?

A. The first answer to quest. 66, admits of no exception; for had there been more than one congregation, they would have been called *churches*. It appears also from Acts ii. 44. iv. 31, 32. vi. 2–5. xv. 4–12. xxi. 20–22, that the disciples at Jerusalem were in the habit of *meeting together in one place*. And indeed, from the best authorities, we know that the disciples of Christ formed but one congregation in a city for a long period after the first promulgation of the gospel.

The greatest bishoprics in the world, even in the the 3rd century, were no more than one single congregation; which were able to meet in one place: *Lord King's Inquiry*, ch. ii; *See also Clarkson's Primitive Episcopacy*.

69. Q. Was the meeting at Jerusalem, mentioned in the 15th of the Acts, an assembly of representative office-bearers from various congregations; and intended as a precedent for meetings of ordinary church officers, as courts of review, or for hearing appeals?

A. No; 1st, it was not a meeting of representatives, but of the apostles, and elders, and *church* at Jerusalem, with the persons who had come up from Antioch: v. 4. 12, 22, 23.

2nd, It was a reference from one church to another respecting a *matter of fact*, whether certain members of the church of Jerusalem had given a fair representation of the principles taught in that church (see v. 1, 2–24); and to the apostles at Jerusalem, for the determination of a *point of docterine* or obligation, which they alone had authority to settle—whether believing Gentiles ought to be circumcised in order to salvation: ver. 2–6.

3d, By the infallible decision of the *apostles alone*, was the matter determined: Peter speaks of the supporters of the opposite sentiments as "*tempting God*," v. 10; James says, "*my sentence is*," v. 19; and the whole body unite in declaring, "It *seemed* good *to the Holy Ghost*, and to us. v. 28.

4th, The decision of that assembly was binding not only on the individuals present, or on parties supposed to be represented by them, *but on all Christians in, and to the end of, the world*; as the subject was a matter of com-

mon concern, and the decision was given by the inspired servants of Christ : see Acts, xvi. 4, 5.

5th, From a mere uninspired decision of any point, there must always exist a right of dissent ; which would not have been admitted in this case.

6th, At this meeting the whole church of Jerusalem was present, was addressed by the apostles, v. 7. 12, 13, agreed with them in the appointment of messengers to the Church at Antioch, v. 22, and was honored by being joined with the apostles and elders in the letter which was written, v. 23.

7th, If this meeting should be considered as a precedent, it would justify *one church with its officers*, to make laws for the *universal and perpetual* obedience of the people of God ; and if any church, or assembly, can say with justice, *It seems good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no other than these necessary things*, there can be no objection, not only to its requiring obedience, but it must be in a high degree sinful not to submit to its authority.

8th, These views of this meeting are not peculiar to Independents.

The meeting of the church of Jerusalem, mentioned in the 15th of the Acts, is commonly considered as the *first Christian council*. But this notion arises from a manifest abuse of the word *council*. That meeting *was only of one church* ; and if such a meeting be called a *council*, it will follow, that there were innumerable councils in the primitive times. But every one knows, that a council is an assembly of deputies, or commissioners, sent from several churches associated by certain bonds in a general body ; and, therefore, the supposition above mentioned falls to the ground : *Mosheim's Ch. Hist.* vol. i. p. 107.

70. Q. Have we any thing in the place of such a meetting, to which we can appeal for the settlement of any dispute which may arise ?

A. We have, what the first churches had not, the apostolical writings complete, in the room of their personal presence, which are sufficient for adjusting any doctrinal or practical difficulties whatever which can occur ; and which alone possess the authority necessary for deciding them.

71. Q. Have councils or meetings of ministers, primary or delegated, for the purpose of deciding controversies or making laws, ever been servicable to the church of Christ?

A. If we can believe the most impartial accounts which have been given of these assemblies, Christianity would not have been a loser, but a gainer, though the greater part of them had never been convened. They have seldom terminated any dispute, but have been, in general, scenes of cabal, intrigue, and contention; and their decisions are often quoted as authorities, instead of the only standard by which all religious questions ought to be determined.

72. Q. What is the meaning of the word presbytery or eldership in 1 Tim. iv. 14?

A. It seems to signify the united office-bearers of a particular congregation; such as those of Ephesus, Acts, xx. 17, or the gifted men who were present with the apostle on the occasion of Timothy's ordination.

37. Q. In the exercise of discipline, where the church is the sole judge, may not individuals frequently be treated very improperly?

A. As every individual is liable to err, so is every Christian society. But the temptation to inflict injury on any individual, must be small in a voluntary community of individuals, who are all under the same laws, and subject to the same treatment. If a Christian church err, it should always be ready to receive remonstrances and to make reparation. Besides, under any plan of church management, there must always be an *ultimate* authority from whose decision there can be no appeal. And if facts are allowed to illustrate principles, it does not appear that a Christian church is, to say the least, more disposed to act improperly than meetings of church rulers; although, no doubt, much prejudice has been excited by the errors and faults of the former, and by some professors of religion delighting to expose and to ridicule them.

74. Q. Are not independent churches in great danger of falling into erroneous sentiments, which might be prevented by a more extensive and systematic plan of church government?

A. The best answer to this, perhaps, would be an appeal to facts. Independent chruches have existed in

Britain for more than 200 years, and fewer departures from the truth or practice of the gospel have taken place in them, than in others; they are now much more numerous than in any former period; and in no body of the same extent is the gospel so generally and uniformly preached; while the societies in England, whose government was wholly in the hands of church rulers, have almost entirely disappeared, or have become mostly Arians and Socinians. *See Bogue and Bennett's Hist. of Dissenters.*

75. Q. Does Independency destroy that union which ought to subsist among the churches of Christ?

A. By no means; it only destroys the exercise of *human authority* in religion. In every other respect it is favourable to unity; and affords every lawful and scriptural means of promoting it. There are no standing parties in independent churches, like the Armenian and Evangelical of the church of England, or the moderate and wild of the church of Scotland; at the same time, all churches of saints, will confess themselves very sinful and imperfect in unity and in all respects.

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## SECTION VI.

### ON THE PUBLIC ORDINANCES OF THE GOSPEL.

76. Q. What ordinances hath Christ appointed his people to observe, either occasionally or statedly?

A. Baptism; the Lord's day; the Lord's Supper; public instruction, including reading the Scriptures, prayer and praise; public contribution, and discipline.

### § 1.—*Baptism.*

77. Q. What is the meaning of the word baptism?

A. The application of water to the subject, whether in the way of sprinkling, pouring, or dipping: Mark, vii. 4, 8; Acts, x. 44—48; Titus, iii. 5, 6; 2 Kings, v. 10—14; Luke, xi, 38; Dan. iv. 33; Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

78. Q. What is Christian baptism?

A. A figure of the washing away of sin, through the revealed love of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; it

points out the depravity of human nature, the necessity of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God, to fit for the kingdom of heaven: Acts xxii. 16; Heb. x. 22; 1 Pet. iii. 21; John, iii. 5.

79. Q. To whom was baptism administered at the beginning of the gospel?

A. To believers and their households: Acts, xvi. 15. 32, 33; 1 Cor. i. 16.

80. Q. Ought it to be administered to such still?

A. Yes; because none of the ordinances of Christ, either in their *matter* or *circumstances*, were intended to be of temporary observance.

81. Q. To which of the ancient institutions does baptism correspond?

A. To circumcision; which had the same symbolical meaning; which was the sign and seal of the same covenant; which embraced also believers and their seed; and to which baptism is compared in the New Testament: Deut. x. 16; Rom. ii. 28, 29; Gen. xvii. 9—14; Exod. xii. 48; Rom. iv. 11, 12; Col. ii. 11—13.

82. Q. You consider, then, the baptism of the children of believers an appointment of God?

A. Yes: because,

1st, Believers and their seed belong to the same covenant with Abraham and his offspring, to which circumcision was attached: Gal. iii. 14–17, 26–29; Rom. iv. 11–17; Acts ii. 38, 39.

2d, We have no instance in the New Testament of the baptism of the head of a family, without the family being baptised along with him.

3d, We have no instance in the New Testament of the baptism of a descendant of Christian parents after his conversion, although its history embraces a period of thirty years.

4th, We read of no complaint by Jewish believers, that their children were by Christianity placed in worse circumstances than formerly; which they must have been, if altogether excluded from the covenant of God.

5th, In the last days, when the Jews shall be brought into the Christian church, it appears their children shall be viewed in the same connexion with the promises of God

as formerly. And we know the privileges of Jews are common to Gentiles.

As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever; Isa. lix. 20, 21. lxi. 8, 9; Jer. xxx. 20. xxxii. 38—40.

6th, The early practice and universal observance of infant baptism, cannot easily be accounted for, but from its apostolic appointment. It is referred to more or less explicitly by Justin Martyr, who wrote about 40 years after the death of the apostles; by Irenæus, about 67; by Tertullian, about 100; by Origen, about 110; by Cyprian, about 150, in whose time a council of 66 bishops met, to consider whether baptism should be delayed till the eighth day; but who do not seem to have had any doubts whether it should be administered at all. The subsequent testimonies are too numerous to be quoted. If the practice was not introduced by the apostles, it is impossible to point out when it was introduced afterwards: *See Wall's History of Infant Baptism.*

83. Q. Are the children of believers entitled to special attention from the churches of Christ?

A. Yes; it is the duty of the churches to make them the subject of special prayer, of particular instruction, of holy watching, and of faithful admonition and warning; as the nursery out of which their numbers may be supplied and increased: Gen. xvii. 19; Exod. xii. 26, 27. Deut. vi. 6, 7; Eph. vi. 1—4.

84. Q. What is the special duty of the head of a family towards his offspring?

A. It is the duty of every Christian parent to communicate religious instruction; to administer judicious correction; to set a holy example; and to abound in prayer for his children; thus bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. See the passages already quoted in this section, and 2 Tim. i. 5. with iii. 15; Prov. iv. 3, 4; 1 Sam. iii. 13, 14; Prov. xiii. 24. xix. 18; Col. iii. 21.

85. Q. By what considerations ought parents to be influenced in thus bringing up their children?

A. By regard to the public profession made at baptism; by reverence for the authority of the Lord; by love to their offspring; by concern for the increase of the church of God; and by the responsibility which attaches to their connexion.

## § 2.—*The Lord's Day.*

86. Q. What day is set apart under the new dispensation for religious worship?

A. The first day of the week, otherwise called the Lord's day.

87. Q. Did Christ change the rest of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week?

A. It appears so; because after his resurrection he repeatedly appeared to his disciples on that day; and the primitive churches seem universally to have met for public worship on it: John, xx. 19—26; Acts, xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

88. Q. What is the chief design of this appointment?

A. To commemorate the resurrection of Christ, when he entered on his rest, after having finished his work; and to be a day of holy rest to the people of God: Heb. iv. 3–10.

89. Q. Are we bound to devote the whole of this day to religious duties?

A. Yes; because from the beginning, God appropriated the seventh part of our time to himself; and, to distinguish it from our own, it is emphatically called the LORD'S DAY: Gen. ii. 2, 3; Exod. xx, 8–11; Rev. i. 10.

90. Q. How ought this day be spent?

A. In the exercises of secret and family worship; in attending on the public institutions of the gospel; in holy gratitude and joy; or in works of necessity and mercy: Isa. lviii. 13, 14; Matt. xii. 1–8. 10–12; Acts, xx. 7.

## § 3.—*The Lord's Supper.*

91. Q. For what puroses did the Lord Jesus institute the ordinance of the supper?

A. He appointed it to preserve the perpetual remembrance of his death, as the only atonement for sin; to *shew forth* or *exhibit* this great event to the world; to

promote the faith, love, and joy of his people; and to be a manifestation of their union and attachment to *each other*, as well as of their connexion with a common Saviour: Matt. xxvi. 26–30; 1 Cor. x. 16, 17; xi. 23–26.

92. Q. In what state of mind ought it to be observed?

A. In the same state in which every other religious duty ought to be performed:—with faith in the Saviour's sacrifice; sorrow on account of sin; gratitude for the gift of redeeming love; joy in the blessed fruits of salvation; and hope in the second coming of the Lord.

93. Q. Is it to be viewed as an oath, covenant, or solemn vow?

A. It is never spoken of in Scripture in this manner; nor does the New Testament ever inculcate religous vows or oaths of any kind: Matt. v. 33–37. Every act of worship, however, *implies* self-dedication to God.

94. Q. Can it be properly observed by a mixed assembly of godly and ungodly persons?

A. As this is the chief social institution of a Christian church, it cannot be observed except by a society of persons who give evidence that they are believers, and who regularly assemble for this and other parts of worship. Its very nature shows, that it is not an *individual* concern, but a *fellowship* in eating and drinking at a *common* table; a stated *communion* not only with the Lord, but with *one another*. The general language of the apostle, therefore, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17, is particularly applicable to this ordinance; and his special language, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, shows that where scriptural discipline is neglected, the Lord's supper, according to Christ's institution, cannot be observed.

95. Q. Was Judas present at the first celebration?

A. It is not probable, from John, xiii. 30, that he was; but if he were, he appeared visibly a disciple though really a hypocrite. His true character was known only to Jesus. Whether, therefore, he was present or absent, it affords no justification of observing this ordinance where visible unbelievers are not excluded.

96. Q. How often ought it to be observed?

A. As often as the other stated institutions of the gospel, *every first day of the week.*

97. Q. What evidence is there for this?

A. 1st, It was the uniform practice of the churches taught by the apostles: Acts, ii. 42. xx. 7; 1 Cor. xi. 26.

2nd, Under the gospel dispensation we have no high festivals besides the Lord's day, and that is never distinguished, at sometimes and not at other, as "ordinance day, communion Sabbath," &c. On every first day of the week, every stated institution of the gospel ought to be observed.

3d, We have as much evidence and authority for the weekly observance of the Lord's supper, as we have for the weekly observance of any other church ordinance whatever; or as we have from the New Testament, for the religious observation of the first day of the week itself.

4th, There is the most undoubted evidence, that this was the practice of all the Christian churches throughout the world, for at least the first three centuries.

5th, It establishes a beautiful harmony between the death and resurrection of Jesus; it is a weekly feast of love to his people; an animating and solemn declaration of the gospel to sinners; and much calculated both to preserve and to exhibit the separation of Christians from the world.

98. Q. Had it been the will of Christ that this institution should be observed weekly, would he not have been more precise in fixing the time?

A. This objection will equally apply to every other ordinance as well as to this, the time of observing any of them not being fixed in explicit language. Besides, when our Lord instituted the supper, the religious observance of the first day of the week itself had not been appointed, and could not, therefore, be mentioned: and when Paul wrote to the Corinthians on this subject, this church was already in the practice of observing it, and required no information respecting the time. The objection is, besides, of no force, if it be admitted that the first churches did nothing but what the apostles enjoined, and that apostolic practice is equally binding with apostolic precept.

99. Q. Will not this frequency lead to carelessness or diminished solemnity in observing the institution?

A. If it do so, it is through human depravity, which

may pervert and abuse anything. But the frequency of secret prayer, of family worship, and of the return of the first day of the week, never produces indifference in a Christian abiding in the faith. Why should it be supposed, that he will venerate the commemoration of his Lord's resurection, and undervalue the memorial of his death? or why should the one be considered as more solemn than the other?

100. Q. Does the language of the apostles, 1 Cor. xi. 27–34, respecting self-examination, and the danger of partaking unworthily, contain any thing inconsistent with the frequent observance of the Lord's supper.

A. By no means: it is the duty of Christians to examine themselves oftener than once a week; instead of only once or twice a year. And the injunctions of the apostle throughout that passage, refer rather to the *proper* and *improper manner* of observing the institution, to the state and characters of the partakers. It has no connexion with the frequency or infrequency of its celebration: ver. 20–22. 33, 34.

### § 4.—*Public Teaching, Reading the Scriptures, Prayer and Praise.*

101. Q. Ought there to be public instruction and admonition every Lord's day in the churches of Christ?

A. Certainly: this was one of the stated institutions of the primitive churches; it is founded on the wants of the people of God; and necessarily results from the appointment of pastors and teachers: Acts, ii. 42; Jer. iii. 15; Eph. iv. 11–16.

102. Q. Who are to teach and exhort in the church?

A. Those who are appointed by the church their pastors or teachers. This limitation is necessary to preserve the order, peace, and edification of the body of Christ; and we have no evidence that any one taught or exhorted in the first churches, but by appointment or permission of his brethren, unless endowed with extraordinary gifts: Rom. xii. 6–8; 1 Cor. xii. 28–30.

103. Q. Is it the duty of church members to exhort one another.

A. Yes: as it is their duty to comfort, warn, and pray for one another: 1 Thess. iv. 18. v. 14; James, v. 16.

104. Q. Is promiscuous exhortation an ordinance to be observed on the Lord's day?

A. 1st. No, because it is a duty enjoined on all—women as well as men—those who have no talents for public speaking, as well as those who have. Consequently it cannot be an institution distinct from public teaching: Heb. x. 24, 25; Eph. v. 18, 19.

2nd, Because it is an every-day duty; it cannot, therefore, be a stated church ordinance; Heb. iii. 13.

3rd, Because the distinction between public teaching and exhorting, as if they were different exercises, is entirely a human opinion, without the smallest warrant from the word of God: Luke, iii. 18; Acts, ii. 40; 1 Thess. ii. 2–4.

4th, Because some of the passages adduced in support of this practice refer entirely to a class of persons in the primitive churches, who have no successors, viz. i. Cor. xiv.

5th, Because the encouragement of such a practice, besides being attended with much evil, seems a direct violation of the precept of the apostle: James, iii. 1: *Be not many of you teachers.*

The above remarks have no relation to mere private meetings of a church, or to cases of necessity; they refer entirely to the practice of exhortation by private brethren, as if it were a stated public ordinance on the Lord's day, distinct from the public teaching of the church.

Q. 105. Ought the reading of the Scriptures to form a stated part of the public service of the Lord's day?

A. Yes: the Old Testament was regularly read in the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath: Luke, iv. 16–20; Acts, xv. 21. It is proper that the reading of the Scriptures should hold an equally conspicuous place in the Christian assemblies; and Paul expressly enjoins the churches to read his epistles: Col. iv. 16; 1 Thess. v. 27.

106. Q. Ought prayer and praise to be regularly attended to in the churches on the first day of the week?

A. Undoubtedly: without them there can be no worship. They are not appointments peculiar to the new dispensation; but are suitable and necessary during every

state of the church of God, as natural expressions of dependence and homage.

### § 5.—*Public Contribution.*

107. Q. Is public contribution a positive institution of the kingdom of Christ?

A. Yes: this seems to be what is intended by the term *fellowship*: Acts, ii. 42; as the same word is used undoubtedly in this sense, and so translated in our English New Testament: Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. ix. 13. It is also particularly enjoined on the church of Corinth; 1 Epist. xvi. 1-2.

108. Q. Why is it called *the fellowship*?

A. Because there is a special giving on the one part, and a receiving on the other, by which the comfort, love and communion of the body of Christ are promoted: 2 Cor. viii. ix; Heb. xiii. 16.

109. Q. To what purposes are the contributions made on the first day of the week to be applied?

A. To all the purposes for which money may be necessary in the churches of Christ; the relief of the poor, the support of the instituted service of the gospel, &c.

110. Q. Why are the references in the epistles to public contribution, more generally connected with the relief of the poor, than with the support of those who labour in the gospel?

A. Because the support of those who minister in the gospel is not matter of *bounty*, but of debt: and their right to it rests not only on their connexion with a church, but on the broad ground of preaching the gospel to men at large: Luke, x. 4–8; 1 Cor. ix. 1–14.

### § 6.—*Discipline.*

111. Q. What do you include under the term discipline?

A. The receiving of persons into the church, and the treatment of offences.

112. Q. In what way are persons to be received into the church?

A. No particular mode of receiving into fellowship, appears to be prescribed by the New Testament. It seems only necessary, that the church should be satisfied that the person applying be a Christian, as far as they can judge, and that the profession of faith should be public. In general, perhaps, satisfaction will be most effectually obtained by the testimony of the pastor and brethren: Acts, ix. 26–28.

113. Q. Into what classes may offences be distributed?

A. Into two; private and public.

114. Q. What do you mean by a *private* offence?

A. Every injury done to a brother, or any offence against God, known only to one or two individuals.

115. Q. How is a private offence to be treated?

A. Always according to our Lord's directions: Matt. xviii. 15–17.

116. Q. What do you mean by a *public* offence?

A. A transgression committed against the church at large; the imbibing or propagating of erroneous and destructive sentiments; or any act of iniquity known in the world.

117. Q. How are such offences to be treated?

A. If they be of such a nature as to allow us still to hope that the transgressor is a Christian—he is to be restored on profession of repentance before the church, and submission to reproof: Gal. vi. 1; 1 Tim. v. 20. But if they are acts of deliberate wickedness, or a departure from the faith and hope of the gospel, such persons are immediately to be excluded: 1 Cor. v. 1. 5. 13; 2 Tim. iii. 1–5.

118. Q. What are the great objects to be kept in view in all acts of discipline?

A. The good of the offender and purity of the church; Matt. xviii. 15; 1 Cor. v. 5–7.

119. Q. Are not great attention, faithfulness, and tenderness, necessary in receiving members and treating offences, to preserve the peace, harmony, and purity of the church, and the glory of God?

A. Yes: 1 Cor. iii. 11–17; Heb. xii. 15–17; Matt. xviii. 7, 9; Rom. xvi. 17, 18; 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21; Rev. ii. 1, 2.

## SECTION VII.

### OF THE OFFICE-BEARERS OF THE CHURCH.

120. Q. What are the only standing offices in the churches of Christ?

A. The offices of bishop and deacon: Phil. i. 1.

121. Q. How do you prove that there are only these two?

A. Because we have no information respecting the choice, qualifications, or duties of any others, but most minute and precise direction respecting them.

### § 1.—*Of Bishops.*

122. Q. By what names is this class of office-bearers denominated?

A. They are called *bishops* or *overseers*, *pastors* or *shepherds*, *rulers*, *elders*, and *ministers*.

123. Q. Why are they called bishops or overseers?

A. Because they are appointed to watch over the souls, or spiritual welfare of their brethren: Acts, xx. 28; Heb. xiii. 17.

124. Q. What does this oversight require?

A. A personal and intimate acquaintance with the state of the church; a deep interest in the spiritual prosperity of every member; affectionate and faithful warning of danger; the administration of judicious counsel, encouragement and reproof; a strong sense of responsibility, and constant prayer for the blessing and preservation of the great Overseer: Ezek. iii. 17–21. xxxiii. 1–9. xxxiv. 1–10; Col. i. 25. iv. 12.

125. Q. Does it not require, on the part of those who are the subjects of this watching, a readiness to communicate their difficulties, trials, and dangers; and a willingness to receive admonition, reproof, and advice?

A. Certainly: as without this, pastoral inspection will be in a great measure inefficient or impracticable: 1 Thess. v. 12–13; 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16.

126. Q. Why are they called pastors or shepherds?

A. Partly for the same reason that they are called overseers; but chiefly because it is their duty to feed or instruct the church: Ephes. iv. 11; 1 Pet. v. 2.

127. Q. What does feeding the church include?

A. Public and private instruction, suited to the various circumstances in which the body and individuals may be placed; dispensing the other stated public ordinances of the gospel; and going before the flock in a holy and zealous example: Isa. xl. 11; Jer. iii. 15; 1 Tim. iii. 1; 2 Tim. ii. 15.

128. Q. Why are they called rulers, or guides?

A. Because it is their duty to govern or guide the church, in attending to the discipline appointed by Christ: Heb. xiii. 7; 1 Tim. v. 17.

129. Q. What is included in this part of their duty?

A. It is their business to converse with all who apply for Christian fellowship; to preside at all meetings of the church; to bring every matter requiring consideration before it; to point out and expound the law applicable to every case of discipline; and to enforce obedience to it as the will of Christ.

130. Q. So all are not rulers or governors in a congregational church?

A. Certainly not. As the provinces of judge and jury are perfectly distinct in human courts; so are the duties and privileges of rulers and people in the churches of Christ. In both cases the rule must be according to law, the determination according to evidence submitted to the people. We may as well be told, that judges are of no use where a jury must find the verdict; as be assured, that there is no pastoral rule, because the church is required to form and express its own judgment.

131. Q. But if the pastor err, or act improperly in governing the church, to whom is he to be accountable?

A. To his brethren, if he do them an injury, and they can point out his error; and to the great Head of the church, from whom he holds his office and authority: Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Pet. v. 4; Col. iv. 17.

132. Why are they called elders?

A. On account of age, or of their possessing the qualities which should belong to the aged: 1 Tim. iii. 6. This designation is not employed in the New Testament exclusively to denote those who hold the pastoral office. In

many places it refers not to office at all, but to long standing, or maturity in the Christian profession : 1 Pet. v. 1–5 ; 2 John, 1 ; 3 John, 1 ; 1 Tim. v. 1.

133. Q. Are there not elders who rule, besides those who teach, in the churches ?

A. No : if there be more pastors than one, they may divide the office, perhaps, so as to suit their convenience or respective qualifications. But the Bible knows nothing of a class of spiritual office-bearers, who have no pastoral authority, nor any right to dispense the ordinances of the gospel : see quest. 121.

134. Q. Does not the apostle speak of such a description of elders, 1 Tim. v. 17 ?

A. Not at all : the apostle may refer to a division of labour in the same office ; but cannot intend two offices, as all the elders referred to were teachers ; the first part of the sentence, including those *specially* noticed in the second ; some are supposed to labour in word and doctrine more than others ; all are entitled to support, but those who labour abundantly, to double maintenance.

The *especially* is not intended to indicate a different office, but to distinguish from others those who assiduously apply themselves to the most important, as well as the most difficult, parts of their office, public teaching : the distinction intended, is, therefore, not official, but personal ; it does not relate to a difference in the powers conferred, but solely to a difference in their application : *Campbell's Eccles. Hist.* lect. vi.

135. Q. Why are they called ministers ?

A. Because they are servants of God, and not lords over his people : 2 Cor. xi. 23 ; Ephes. vi. 21 : 1 Pet. v. 3.

136. Q. Are not the qualifications for the work of the ministry, many and important ?

A. Yes : as is evident from the description of these qualifications given by the apostle : 1 Tim. iii. 1–7 ; Tit. i. 6–9.

137. Q. How are persons suitably qualified for this office to be obtained ?

A. It is the duty of the churches of Christ, to use all lawful and scriptural means to procure, improve, and qualify men of suitable characters, dispositions, and talents, for this work : Eph. iv. 11, 12 ; 2 Tim. ii. 2.

138. Q. Who are to be judges of their fitness for the offices?

A. The church which is to enjoy the benefit of their labours.

139. Q. How are they to be appointed to their office?

A. By prayer and fasting, and laying on of hands: Acts, xvi. 23; xiii. 3. vi. 6.

140. Q. Ought there to be more than one pastor in a church?

A. This must depend on the number and resources of the church, on the talents and activity of the pastors, and on various other circumstances.

## § 2.—*Of Deacons.*

141. Q. What is the meaning of the word *deacon*?

A. Same as minister—a servant.

142. Q. What kind of service is he appointed to perform?

A. To take the charge of receiving and distributing the funds of the church, and of all temporal matters; Acts, vi, 2, 3.

143. Q. What are the purposes to which the contributions of a church are to be appropriated?

A. The support of the poor, the table of the Lord, and the maintenance of those who labour in word and doctrine.

144. Q. What are the qualifications of deacons?

A. These are described in Acts, vi. 1–5; and 1 Tim. iii. 8–13.

145. Q. In what manner are they to be appointed to office?

A. By prayer, and laying on of hands: Acts, vi. 6.

146. Q. Were females ever employed in this office?

A. Yes: in particular places, in which, perhaps, there was little intercourse between the sexes: Rom. xvi. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 11.

147. Q. Ought they to be continued in churches still?

A. If circumstances require them. There were none in the church at Jerusalem, although the office originated there in the complaints of the *widows*: Acts, vi. 1.

## SECTION VIII.

### MISCELLANEOUS DUTIES.

#### § 1.—*Of the Duties of Church Members and Churches.*

148. Q. What duties do members of a church owe to their pastors?

A. They are bound to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake; 1 Thess. vi. 12, 13: to submit to their instructions and admonitions; Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16: to minister to their necessities and comfort; Gal. vi. 6: and to follow their faith and conduct, as they follow Christ: Heb. xiii. 7; 1 Tim. iv. 12.

149. Q. What duties do members of a church owe to one another?

A. Every thing which is included in our Lord's new commandment, "Love one another *as* I have loved you:" John, xiii. 34, 35; and which the apostle calls, "the perfect bond;" Col. iii. 14.

150. Q. How will this principle discover itself towards the poor?

A. By liberality in supplying their wants: Acts, ii. 44, 45, and iv. 34; 2 Cor. viii. ix; 1 John, iii. 17.

151. Q. How will it manifest itself towards the afflicted and persecuted?

A. By administering comfort, and by sympathising with their sufferings: James, i. 27; Heb. xii. 12, 13, x. 32—34; 2 Tim. i. 16, 18.

152. Q. How will it show itself to the erring and disobedient?

A. By imparting instruction, warning, and reproof: 1 Thess. v. 14; 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15: Heb. xii. 15, 17.

153. Q. How will it operate generally towards all?

A. By every exercise of kindness, gentleness, forbearance, long-suffering, fidelity, &c. &c.: 1 Cor. xiii; Phil. iv. 8, 9; Col. iii. 12—14.

154. Q. What do churches holding to the same faith owe to one another?

A. They ought to be united by the same principle of love, and, in as far as circumstances admit, ought to express it in the same manner as if they were parts of one church, as indeed they are: 1 Cor. xii. 13—27.

155. Q. Ought they to take an interest in each other's spiritual welfare?

A. Yes: Acts, xi. 22—26; xiv. 21, 27; xv. 3

156. Q. Should they not take an interest also in each other's temporal circumstances?

A. Yes: Acts, xi. 27—30; 2 Cor. ix. 1; Rom. xv. 26 27.

157. Q. Are they not bound to unite together for diffusing the knowledge of the gospel?

A. Whatever they cannot accomplish individually, it is proper and lawful for them to unite that they may effect; and, as sending the gospel abroad, and other things of a similar kind, require, both in regard to instruments and means of support, more than any one church can in general furnish, the combination of churches for such purposes becomes an important duty.

158. Q. Ought Christians to show themselves ready to every good work in which they may, without sacrifice of principle, co-operate with fellow-believers, though in some things differently minded, or with others?

A. Yes: it is their duty to countenance and support such institutions as Bible, Missionary, and Tract Societies, for the propagation of Christianity; and to co-operate with others in every scheme of public benevolence, which has for its object the welfare of mankind: Phil. iii. 16, 17.

## § 2.—*Of Fasting.*

159. Q. Is fasting a duty under the New Testament?

A. Yes: Matt. vi. 16—18; Luke, v. 33—35.

160. Q. In what does it consist?

A. In entire or partial abstinence from food and other enjoyments, and in devotional exercises, for a limited time: Judges, xx. 26; Jonah, iii. 7, 8; Acts x. 30.

161. Q. What is the design of it?

A. To mortify the flesh, to show our displeasure at sin, to deprecate the divine displeasure, and to implore the divine compassion: Joel, ii. 12—14; Daniel ix. 3.

162. Q. By whom, and on what occasions, may it be observed?

A. By individuals, families, or churches; on such occasions as seem to require extraordinary abasement, prayer, and divine interposition: Ezra, viii. 21—23; Matt. iv. 1—11; Psalms, xxxv. 13; Luke, ii. 37: 1 Cor. vii. 5; Acts, xiii. 2, 3. xiv. 23; Isaiah, lviii. 3—6.

163. Q. In what manner ought it to be observed?

A. According to our Lord's directions, as privately and unostentatiously as possible: Matt. vi. 16—18.

### § 3.—*Of Family Worship.*

164. Q. Ought the worship of God to be maintained in the families of Christians?

A. Certainly: Joshua, xxiv. 15; Jer. x. 25; Acts, x. 1, 2; Rom. xvi. 5; 2 Samuel, vi. 18—20.

165. Q. How often ought it to be performed?

A. At least every morning and evening, in all cases where it is practicable: Psalms, lv. 17; Psalms, cxxvii. cxxviii.

166. Q. In what ought it to consist?

A. In prayer, praise, and reading the word of God: Psalms, cxviii. 15; Deut. vi. 6—9; Col. ii. 19.

### § 4.—*Of the Duty of Christians to their Country.*

167. Q. What do Christians owe to their country in general, and to its government in particular?

A. It is the duty of Christians to pray for the peace of their country, and to promote its prosperity by every honourable means; to make supplication for the government; to obey its laws, to honour its rulers, and not to speak evil of them, and to contribute conscientiously their portion of its taxes: Jer. xxix. 7; Rom. x. 1; xiii. 1—7; 1 Tim. ii. 1—4; 1 Pet. ii. 13—17.

168. Q. Does this obedience extend to any thing of a religious nature?

A. No: submission in religious matters to civil authority is inconsistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom; with exclusive deference to his authority; and

with the language, and conduct both of our Lord and his apostles: Mark, xii. 13—17; Luke, xiii. 31—38; Acts, iv. 18, 19. v. 29.

169. Q. Has every human creature a right to worship God as he judges to be proper, without being liable to temporal restraints, penalties, disabilities or discouragements of any kind whatever, except for evil doing, which no plea of conscience or religion can vindicate?

A. Undoubtedly. This is one of the most valuable and unalienable of human rights. It is both wicked and absurd, for one man to interfere between another person and his Creator; to whom alone in religion he is accountable: Rom. xiv. 4; James, iv. 12.

170. Q. Is this view of religious liberty taught in the word of God?

A. Clearly. In our Lord's grand rule: Matt. vii. 12. In the parable of the wheat and tares: Matt. xiii. 28—30. In the apostle's injunction, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind:" Rom. xiv. 5. In his declaration, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin:" Rom. xiv. 23. And in the strong language of Scripture respecting persecution and persecutors; Matt. v. 10—12; Luke, ix. 51—56; 1 Thess. ii. 14—16; 2 Thess. i. 4—10.

171. Q. What is the duty of Christians when persecuted by the government of their country?

A. When all other peaceable and allowed means of redress fail, their duty is clearly pointed out by our Lord: Matt. x. 23; xxvi. 52.

## § 5.—*Conclusion.*

172. Q. What place ought the order and institutions of Christ's kingdom to hold in our Christian profession?

A. They ought never to be viewed as *ends;* but as means appointed by Christ, to promote certain important ends; and as entitled to our conscientious regard, because they are his appointments.

173. Q. What are some of those ends?

A. The promotion of his people's faith, purity and comfort; their separation from the world; the advancement of the interests of the gospel in the earth; and the

furtherance of his own glory; Rom. xiv. 17—19; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Col. i. 28; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

174. Q. What effects ought scriptural views of the nature and ordinances of the kingdom of Christ, to produce on those individuals and churches who profess and observe them?

A. They ought to be distinguished for their steady and enlightened obedience to every other part of the will of Christ; for their affectionate regard to each other; for their humility, zeal, and happiness; for their forbearance and meekness to other Christians differently minded; and for their united and persevering exertions in the cause of the common Christianity.

THE END.

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ON

# Christian Communion.

THERE are three things essential to Christian communion. The first is renewed principle, without which no man can be a Christian. The second is the government of Bible truth, without which Christian principle cannot be exercised. And the third is the voluntary connection of Christians in a church capacity, without which they cannot perform the duties of Christian fellowship. The principles of this fellowship, and the impossibility of their being exercised but among Christians, dwelling together in unity, shall be explained in the following remarks :—

1. The fellowship of believers and unbelievers in one church is declared, in the word of God, to be *utterly impracticable*. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infiel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" 2 Cor. vi. 14-16. Now let us apply these questions to the principles of Christian fellowship, and see how thay can be answered.

The basis of Christian fellowship is "love one to another for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in them:" but how can those be loved, for the truth's sake, in whom the truth evidently does not dwell?

Christian communion is a relation of Christian brotherhood. "All they are brethren," Mat. xxiii. [redacted] But how can those be acknowledged as Christian brethren who are the known "children of wrath?"

In Christian communion believers have a common interest in one another, as belonging to the same body. They are "members one of another," Eph. iv. 25. But "what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

Christian fellowship implies a joint interest in the things of God as "fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel," Eph. iii. 6. But how can those be acknowledged as fellow-partakers of spiritual blessings, who show, by their hearts and lives being not right with God, that they have "neither part nor lot in the matter?"

Christian communion implies agreement in sentiment

about the rules of Christian faith and practice, being "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," 1 Cor. i. 10. But how can those agree with Christians about the truth, whose "carnal minds are enmity against God, and not subject to his law?"

Christian communion includes a common experience of the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. It is "the fellowship of the Spirit," Phil. ii. 1. But how can those take part in this fellowship who are "sensual, not having the Spirit?"

The fellowship of Christians is productive of much comfort. "Their hearts are comforted, being knit together in love," Col. ii. 2. But what comfort can arise from walking with men, who are spoiling and hindering the work of God, and deceiving and destroying their own souls? and where is the evidence of spiritual taste in those who can "please themselves in the children of strangers?" Isa. ii. 6.

In Christian fellowship there is an agreed subjection to Christ alone, "One is their Master, even Christ," Mat. xxiii. 8. But how can those become yoke-fellows in this service who will not have "this man to reign over them?"

In Christian communion, believers are fellow-workers in the kingdom of God, "striving together for the faith of the gospel," that they may with one mind and one mouth glorify God. But how can those take part in this spiritual service, whose unrenewed condition leaves them capable only of performing "the works of the flesh?"

In Christian fellowship there are various duties which can be performed lawfully only to brethren. Hence the performance of these duties to false professors becomes a sinful and injurious misapplication of the divine law. It amounts to giving "that which is holy to dogs;" and leads to consequences the very opposite of the design of the great Lawgiver.

Christian communion includes a joint participation in gospel ordinances, especially in the Lord's Supper. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. But how can one make this confession at a communion table, while he is conscious that many who sit with him are not "partakers

of that bread," but "eating and drinking judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body?" The man who signifies by his bodily exercise at a communion table what he knows is not true, is guilty of lying before God. And how can he expect to enjoy fellowship with God, when he thus comes before him with a lie in his right hand? It may be owing to this cause that many of the more serious people in corrupt churches find the *sacrament sabbath* a day of darkness and heaviness. No wonder then that they are clamorous against weekly communion.

Some have tried to get rid of this difficulty by alleging that, in eating the Lord's Supper, each has to account for himself only. But this is not Scripture doctrine. It is not lawful for any to eat the Lord's Supper alone, or as an individual among many. It is a communion feast. One of the main designs of it is to shew forth the communion of the saints in "the body and blood of their Lord." Those, then, who associate with ungodly men at a communion table, are either guilty of lying before God, as has been already explained, or they do not attend to the supper as a communion feast, and "this is not to eat the Lord's Supper."

Others have endeavoured to strengthen their hearts in this work of corruption, by contending that no profession can be made of joint participation in the body and blood of the Lord, seeing that occasional apostacies forbid the conclusion that all are, at any time, genuine believers, in the purest churches. But this reasoning is subversive of Christian fellowship altogether. It might as well be reasoned that because we are not certain as to who may endure unto the end, we cannot acknowledge any to be Christians, or perform to them the duties of Christian fellowship. "The Lord knoweth them that are his:" but "secret things belong to the Lord." It is with what is seen and known that we have to do. When one seems to be a believer, it is duty to receive and treat him as such; and should his hypocrisy afterwards be made manifest, it is then duty to "count him a heathen man and a publican." Simon Magus was acknowledged, and treated as a believer, so long as his profession seemed credible, but when it appeared that his heart was not right in the sight of God, he was excluded, as one who had neither part nor lot in the matter.

2. It is commanded, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," 2 Cor. vi. 14. This command

is as express and positive, as "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

3. The churches are commanded to make the purity of their communion an object of special and diligent watchfulness, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God," Heb. xii. 15. This surely implies that none should be received or retained in a Christian church, but such as seem to be partakers of the grace of God.

4. Accordingly, it is further commanded, that all who are not partakers of this grace should be put away from the churches. "It shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people," Acts iii. 23. "If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican," Mat. xviii. 17. "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." "I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to keep company with fornicators; yet, not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now have I written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such an one, no not to eat."—"Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person," 1 Cor. v. 7-11, 13.

5. "When churches become so obstinately corrupt, that they will not obey these commands, believers are required to separate from them. "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing," 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn away," 2 Tim. iii. 5. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sin," Rev. xviii. 4.

6. These commands correspond exactly with the Lord's work, in gathering the churches. "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"—rather, "such as were saved,"—"and of the rest durst no man join himself to them," Acts ii. 47 and v. 13.

7. The primitive disciples were conformed to the will of their Lord in this matter. They would not receive Saul till they obtained evidence of his being a disciple, Acts ix. 26–28. And it is said of "false brethren," that they were "unawares brought in," which implies, that they would not have been allowed to enter, had their character been known, Gal. ii. 4.

8. The same general principle is supported by the approved character of the primitive churches. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul," Acts iv. 32. "The called in Christ Jesus," Rom. i. 6. "Sanctified in Christ Jesus," 1 Cor. i. 2. "Faithful in Christ Jesus," Eph. i. 1. "Saints and faithful brethren in Christ," Col. i. 2. "In God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. i. 1. "Lively stones, built up a spiritual house," 1 Pet. ii. 5. "A building fitly framed together, growing unto an holy temple in the Lord—builded together for an habitation of God, thro' the Spirit," Eph. ii. 21, 22. Characters of an opposite description were not acknowledged as belonging to the Church of Christ, for Paul says, "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end," Heb. iii. 6.

9. Accordingly, the primitive churches were praised or blamed, as they supported this view of character, or acted otherwise. Those were approved who could "not bear them that were evil; and had tried them who said they were apostles, and were not; and found them liars," Rev. ii. 2. While others were rebuked sharply, for retaining some among them who held false doctrine, and were of immoral conduct. Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20. 1 Cor. v. 2.

10. The criminality of allowing corruption in churches further appears from observing how it affected the mind of Paul. In reference to such a case, he says, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears," 2 Cor. ii. 4. Can we suppose that to be a small matter, which so greatly affected the great mind of this man of God? We never read of his being so greatly affected by the whole amount of his other sufferings for the gospel's sake. That must have been a case of great evil, indeed, which so greatly affected a mind, otherwise capable of glorying in tribulation. What a contrast between this display of ministerial feeling, and that of those who can coldly contemplate the grossest impurities of their church, without a sigh and without a tear, and without any exertion to separate the precious from the vile.

11. Separation from a corrupt church is necessary for making manifest the true character and sanctification of a believer, and for making him "meet for the masters' use."—"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and

some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work," 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21. On this passage it may be remarked,

(1.) That the "*great house*," here spoken of, evidently signifies a corrupt church, because it contains vessels "to dishonour," as well as "vessels to honour." The expression "*great house*," seems to mark it out as belonging to the "*great city*," called "*Babylon the great*,"—a house made improperly great, by the foolish builders, than a Scriptural one of proper size, as would allow, obviously for the accommodation of a 'mixed multitude' of "vessels of wood and of earth," as well as of gold and of silver.

(2.) When a community have become so great "by corruption that they cannot be purged by Scripture discipline, a believer must "purge himself from these." He must not remain under a foolish impression, that there are other vessels of gold and silver in this great house, as well as himself. He is in danger of being a partaker of other men's sins, if they are not removed; and must, therefore, "purge himself from these," that he may deliver his own soul.

(3.) This separation from a church become great by corruptions, is necessary for proving a man to be "a vessel unto honour." So long as he remains among the "mixed multitude," he makes himself a doubtful character. It is doubtful to which class he belongs. If he can "bear them that are evil," it may be that he is allied to them and at heart one with them, under all his pretensions to superior sanctity. "But if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour." It will then appear what spirit he is of, and to which class he belongs. And he will appear "unto honour." Though on account of this step he may be hated and despised of men, the enduring of this cross for the truth's sake, will procure for him the honour of consistency and decision of character, even in the sight of his enemies, and he and his work will be found to praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

(4.) Such separation is an important branch of a believer's sanctification. Believers, in a corrupt church, may be sanctified in part. They may escape the grosser pollutions of the world, "through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and arrive at certain

degrees of circumspection and devotional seriousness, corresponding with their attainments in knowledge and grace. But they must be greatly wanting in love to God, while they can sit with his known enemies; greatly wanting in love to the brethren, while they can suffer sin upon them, and allow them to be partakers of other men's sins;—greatly wanting in compassion for poor sinners, while they can countenance them in maintaining their false profession, and altogether wanting in many important Christian duties, which can be performed acceptably only, in connection with faithful brethren. Hence, the force and propriety of the expression,—"If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, *sanctified*."

(5.) This purging is also necessary for rendering a man "meet for the Master's use." Those who are wedded to habits of impure communion, are very unfit for the work of building a "spiritual temple to the Lord." Such will never be content to build with "lively stones" only. They must have "a great house;" therefore, they must build of all kinds of materials that will bulk well. They want to build a Babel, therefore they make the "people one." Until a man purge himself from these carnal notions, he is not meet for the Master's use, either as a minister, or member, in building 'a habitation of God, though the Spirit.' He is not fit for the kingdom of God. He is not prepared for any one good work, relating to the building and sanctifying of the house of God. He may do much work, but it will be bad work. He may build a "great house," but it will be an insufficient house—a house that will neither stand the fire, nor the storm, nor the trial, of the Master of the house, in that day, when he will "try every man's work, of what sort it is."

12. Those who remain connected with a corrupt church are partakers of her sins. This is a most unpopular and unpalatable sentiment, but it is scriptural. The truth of it appears from the command, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." Rev. xviii. 4. And the truth of it also appears from the nature of the case. Supposing servants were to connive with a band of thieves and robbers, so as to give them access to rob and spoil their master's house, and otherwise assist to secrete the stolen property, and conceal the guilty culprits; would they not, on this being fully proven, be found accomplices in the crime, and liable to the same

punishment? Now, this is the way in which Christ is treated by all who support impure communion. They open the door of communion to those who spoil and rob the house, and all their reasoning in defence of such conduct, is nothing else than an exertion to secrete the guilt, and conceal the true character of the main delinquents. But are they not verily partakers of their sins, while they thus aid, and assist, and defend them in their sins? The sin of unworthy communicating, like the sin of adultery, cannot be committed alone. A man must have some to sit with him, and partake with him in this ordinance, else he cannot attend to it. Mark then, reader, the worthless wretch who accommodates the vile adulterer, is not more a partaker of his sin, than those vile partakers of the sins of unworthy communicants, who accommodate them by partaking with them, without which they could not commit that sin. It is perhaps in this view of the matter, that impure communion is called adultery and fornication, in some parts of the word of God: and on this ground men are accountable for the sins one of another. Hence, in treating the sins which were in the primitive churches, the language of reproof is directed chiefly against the church, for retaining the offenders. The "deeds of the Nicolaitans," "the doctrine of Balaam," "the teaching of Jezebel," as well as the offence at Corinth, are all pointed at as grounds of complaint against the churches, for not having put away these evils from among them. And hence, those who walk with unworthy communicants, are not only partakers of their sins, by neglecting the means of deliverance from sin in what Christ hath ordained "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

13. Separation from a corrupt church is necessary for enjoyment of the divine favour. Hence the connection of the command, and the promise in the following words:—"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. And accordingly Isaiah speaks of the Lord forsaking "his people of the house of Jacob, because they pleased themselves in the children of strangers," Isa. ii. 6. "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God," James iv. 4. God is jealous of the love of his people. If therefore they cleave

to his enemies, he will forsake them. If they come out from among them, he will be a Father to them. Many of the people of God have found it so, who speak feelingly of the peace and comfort they now enjoy in scripture fellowship, in contrast with the painful sensations formerly attending their intercourse with worldly churches.

14. There is great injury done to unbelievers by admitting them to Christian ordinances. It makes them, "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." It leads them to dishonour God by going to the communion table to betray the Son of man with a kiss, and afterwards returning to crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame by their ungodly conduct. It leads them to defile the temple of God, and exposes them to the threatening, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy," 1 Cor. iii. 17. It tends to shut their eyes against Bible truth, to harden their hearts against convictions of sin, and to make them "at ease in Zion." It tends to deceive their souls, in leading them to think that they are something while they are nothing, to rest in a form without the power of godliness, and to assume a name that they live, while they are dead. Proselytes of this description are twofold more the children of wrath than before. Oh, it is not kind—it is cruel—it is very cruel, thus to help forward poor blind sinners, who know not what they do, to work out their own destruction.

15. The admission of unbelievers to Christian ordinances is also an occasion of corruption and great injury to the church. It was with reference to this that Paul reasoned, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," 1 Cor. v. 6. Now, observe how the lump is leavened. One is observed indulging in one of those sins, concerning which it is said, that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." But because it is only one sin, or the sin of one individual, and not of gross enormity in the sight of men, it is counted "a little leaven," and is winked at, and neglected. But by this neglect, sin in others stumble, and fall, and are wounded. The forbearance of the original offence, seems to imply something approaching very nearly to preparation on the part of the whole community to do the same evil, and to do it with impunity. Hence, others are emboldened to indulge in similar sins, conceiving that the laws of equity entitle them to the advantage of the same forbearance. On the same ground, the more faithfully disposed begin to hesitate about attempting to remove

new offences, alleging that it would have been at variance with the precedents of former indulgence, or, that with the prevailing notions about this new forbearance, it could not be attempted but at the risk of producing contentions and divisions. And thus the whole church [illegible] leavened with conformity to the world.

The open display of this kind of liberality makes the world to fall in love with them, judging reasonably enough, that this is the church in which they can be accommodated in their favourite scheme of serving God and Mammon. Numbers of almost-Christians seek admission, who, of course, cannot be rejected if they are no worse than others, who are retained; and under impressions acquired by the previous progress of corruption, the church becomes easily reconciled to this laxity, finding that it tends so admirably to their prosperity in respect of numbers, and in a way too which frees them from the reproach of their former narrow-minded bigotry, and which affords them the smiles of the world, the praise of men, and all that may otherwise render them respectable in the sight of the multitude. In this way the church attains to prosperity; but what is its real condition? It has gained bulk, but it has lost its first love, its life, and its purity. It has become like one "sick of the palsy," without health, and without spiritual energy; the subject of incurable disease and corruption. Iniquity has abounded. The love of many has waxed cold. Times and laws have been changed in accommodation to the changed condition of the people. Mutual watchfulness is neglected. Scripture discipline is discontinued. Christian unity is broken. Christian confidence is extinct. Scripture ordinances are perverted. Every principle of Christian fellowship is excluded. And thus the whole lump is leavened into one mass of incurable corruption.

Now, supposing there may yet be found in this church, a very small remnant of those who have some good thing in them towards the Lord God of Israel, what is their condition? and what have they to expect by adhering to this kind of communion? They can expect nothing but the loss of their Christian privileges, while they are also partakers of other men's sins, and in bondage to men who will neither keep the law themselves, nor allow them to keep it scripturally,—characters who, according to the divine prediction, will become "snares and traps to them," "scourges in their sides and thorns in their eyes," a hindrance, a burden, a grief of heart, and a curse to

them in all their religious concerns. And if any professing to fear God do not feel it so, it is because they have become so far leavened by the spirit of their ungodly yokefellows, as to be sunk into all the insensibilities of spiritual declension.

16. The corruptions of churches will prove exceedingly injurious to those ministers who have taken part in promoting them. This is clearly set forth in 1 Cor. iii. 10-18, where this work of corruption is represented by the figure of a man building in the same house, "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble." The first three of these, form a class of valuable and durable materials, representing believers, as suitable for building a house for the King, the LORD of hosts; but the other three form a class of perishable materials, very unsuitable for that purpose. These figures also set forth the extreme folly of those who attempt to build a house for God with such materials. There is not a man on earth, who would not be counted fit for Bedlam, were he to set about building a house of hay and stubble, for man. Yet many who profess to build a house for God of materials equally unsuitable for the purpose, are counted very wise and learned. Such is the blindness of men in things pertaining to God. "But every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward"—a reward of his whole work, given unto him "as a crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ." But if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; and surely the loss will be great. It will be the loss of all his labour—the loss of all his vain hopes of acceptance—the loss of expected reward—and the loss of many precious souls, deceived and ruined through the unfaithfulness of his ministry! O is not this enough to awaken and alarm those who are making merchandise of souls?

But some will say the case is not so alarming, seeing it is added, "But he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire." Now this implies the bare possibility of salvation. It reminds us of the passage, "Others save with fear pulling them out of the fire." The salvation of such can have no connection with their work; which tends to destruction, according to what is stated, verse 17. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." Yet such may be saved, if they repent. But if they are

saved, it will be as Lot was saved, with the loss of his stuff; or as the thief on the cross was saved, without rewardable works, and notwithstanding of their hay and stubble building having merited destruction.

Some of this class of builders who, for obvious reasons, cannot relish this view of the passage, have alleged that it refers to building true or false doctrine, or good or bad works on the sure foundation. But it is of building a church that Paul here speaks, for he begins the discussion by saying, "ye are God's building," verse 9; and towards the conclusion, he says, "the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are," v. 17.

Others have endeavoured to quiet their consciences in this work of corruption, by alleging that they stand exonerated by warning their people of the guilt and danger of unworthy communicating. Now Eli tried this plan long ago, but did not succeed in it. He warned his sons of the guilt and danger of their conduct; and this seems to have pleased himself, but it did not please God, for he complained of him to Samuel, that "his sons made themselves vile, and *he restrained them not:*" and for this iniquity he and his house were visited with terrible things in righteousness, see 1 Sam. ii. iii. iv. Now what will be the probable effect of warning without restraining. A minister tells his people that "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body," but "he restraineth them not." Many are allowed to eat and drink, who are known to be in a natural condition, and therefore incapable of discerning the Lord's body, or any of the things of the Spirit of God. And this is very like as if a Quack should hold out a phial of poison to his patient, warning him faithfully that death would be the consequence of drinking it, and yet assist him in drinking it. Now, what effect is this likely to produce on a mind having any capacity or concern to think of it? He must conclude either that this man has no care for his soul—that he is just as willing that he should die as live; or that he does not believe one word of all the strong things he has said about the guilt and danger of eating and drinking unworthily. It is vain to talk about preparation for the Lord's supper, without discipline. The scripture plan is, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore, let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wicked-

ness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. It is impossible to keep this feast in faith, without mutual confidence as to godly sincerity and truth and brotherly love. Hence it is commanded, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Mat. v. 23, 24. A whole week, a whole month of preaching-days will avail nothing without purging out the old leaven. Nor will the most learned arguments justify the most respectable clergyman in this work of corruption. He may reason, and labour and prosper, and gain, in his own way, but in the end, "he shall suffer loss," and be in danger of losing his own soul also, except he repent.

17. The unscriptural fellowship of believers and unbelievers, has been a main cause of the heaviest judgments with which God has visited the world. What was the cause of the deluge by which God destroyed the old world? This calamity originated in the sons of God uniting with the daughters of men, Gen. vi. 1-3. What was it that brought upon the world the lasting curse of the confusion of tongues! It was an attempt to make the people one, between whom God had put enmity that provoked the Most High to inflict this punishment, Gen. xi. 6, 7.—Why did the Jews suffer seventy years' captivity in Babylon? It was on account of the corruption of their church: and it is on account of the corruptions of churches professng Christianity, that God will pour out the vials of his wrath in the latter days.

18. God calls upon all men every where to repent of the evils described in the foregoing particulars. The churches of Asia were called upon severally to repent of their corruptions. The church at Corinth was reproved, because they had not mourned so as to put away evil from among them, and they afterwards did repent, for Paul tells us, that it was "concerning this self-same thing, that they sorrowed after a godly sort," 2 Cor. vii. 11. But, reader, it is now time to inquire whether you have been a partaker of such sins, and whether you have repented, or feel now disposed to repent in consideration of what has been set before you.

Charity dictates the conclusion, that many serious people are wanting in this matter, from want of scripture knowledge of the subject, while exposed to the influence

of the teaching of those who are interested in supporting the work of corruption. But alas, there are also many who profess to know the Lord's will, who offer various reasons why they will not do it. There is a communication now before me, in which the writer holds forth in strong language, the corruption of all national churches, and of all seceders resembling these churches, shewing from the language of prophecy, the certainty of their downfall, who nevertheless contented himself for a time in connection with one of these churches, alleging that there was no call for separation till the approach of the millennium. Now, in reply to this, it may be said, that separation from incurable corruption, has been binding and necessary in all ages, and in all circumstances, for otherwise it is impossible to avoid the guilt and danger of being partakers of other men's sins. We also read of "a remnant of the woman's seed which kept the commandments of God and had the testimony of Jesus,"—a remnant who had "not defiled themselves with women," such as the daughters of Babylon. To them it was duty to adhere in times of the most abounding antichristian corruption, Rev. xii. 17. And when a man has become persuaded that a house is to fall, it is surely wise to leave it, least he also fall in its ruins.

But it is not of so much consequence to refute arguments, as to find out and expose the motives or causes which induce men to espouse and support corruption. When Christ reasoned with men who sought to excuse themselves in not obeying the truth, his words were not framed so much to repel their vain reasonings, as to expose the hidden motives which gave rise to them. I shall therefore now bring to view, what the scriptures point out as the causes why some adhere to impure communion.

The first of these is defectiveness of love to God. So Joshua understood it when he said, "Take good heed, therefore, unto yourselves that ye love the Lord your God. Else if ye do in any ways go back and cleave unto the remnant of those nations," &c. Love to God is here recommended as the only effectual preservative from cleaving to the men of the world. Love to God will dispose the mind to give a decided preference to the people of God, and the ways of God, and in so far as this preference is wanting, love to God is wanting. Christ requires this kind of evidence of love to him, for he says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

A spirit of conformity to the world, is another cause of

adherence to worldly churches. This is intimated in the exhortation, "And be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," Rom. xii. 2. A spirit of conformity to the world disposes to intercourse with the world. A spirit of conformity to Christ disposes to do the will of Christ at all hazards. A father observes his son strolling and playing with others of a disorderly cast, and calls him home in order that he may attend to his duty, and enjoy his privileges, and escape the danger arising from the evil communications of his naughty associates. The boy craves delay under various pretences, but it is evident that the love of play, and the love of bad company, lie at the bottom of all his arguments; and it is equally evident that it is the love of something gratifying to the fleshly mind in worldly churches, that leads any professing godliness, to plead for delay in leaving them.

Paul ascribes the toleration of corruption in the church at Corinth to pride. He says, "And ye are PUFFED UP, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." 1 Cor. v. 2. Sin began by pride exalting itself against the knowledge of God: and it is owing to the humbling tendency of the principles of the kingdom of Christ, that they are rejected by those who, through the deceitfulness of sin, seek to nourish their pride by alliance with what is counted great and respectable in the sight of the world.

Another cause of disobedience in this matter, is want of a spirit of trembling at the word of the LORD. Hence, this gracious principle is pointed at by Ezra, as accounting for the Jews' consenting to separate from the people of the land with whom they had formed a sinful alliance, Ezra ix. 2–4; x. 3. When a man feels the effectual working of the truth, so as to tremble at the word, he obeys willingly; but where this is wanting, the mind will go no farther in obedience, than corresponds with carnal purposes.

Want of zeal for the purity and honour of God's house, also accounts for laxity of communion. The zeal of Christ for his Father's house, led him to cleanse it, and in doing it, his disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," John ii. 17. But, where is the zeal of those professed friends of Christ, who can wink at the trade of making merchandize of souls, in the house that is called by his name?

Indifference about connection with a scriptural church is also a sure indication of the want of Scripture principles, in relation to Christian fellowship. No man could think of making a proper use of nets, and sails, and oars, or other sea-faring articles, on the top of a mountain. Such materials are of no use, but in doing business on the waters. In like manner, the principles of Christian fellowship cannot be exercised but in a church, scripturally constituted for their accommodation and use, as will appear from what is stated, page 1.

It is also evident that indifference about the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, arises from not living more fully under the influences of the Holy Spirit. The HOLY SPIRIT leadeth into the truth, and worketh in the saints to will and to do God's good pleasure. But by grieving the Spirit, many are left to walk after their own conceits, by which they become indisposed for spiritual things. Reader, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways."—"Commune with your own heart."—Examine the motives of your conduct, as in the sight of God, and as having to give an account in the day of the Lord Jesus. And may the Lord give you an understanding and willing heart to do his will in all things, that his name may be glorified. Amen.

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# WHAT IS A CHURCH OF CHRIST?

THE importance of this question will not be disputed by any who reverence the authority of the word of God, and who regard the Scriptures as the only standard of religious truth and Christian practice. If the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head of the church, has been graciously pleased to promulgate laws for the regulation of his people in their associated capacity, and to make provision for the proper ordering of the affairs of his house, it surely becomes his followers carefully to investigate these laws, and to endeavour to ascertain what that order is, which he has established. This is a matter in regard to which no one can be indifferent, who is ambitious of walking so as to please Christ; inasmuch as obedience to his injunctions, as the supreme Law-giver in the church, must be connected with the proper carrying out of his designs of mercy in reference to mankind, and with the advancement of his glory in the earth. The sincere follower of the redeemer, therefore, will betake himself to the careful study of the New Testament, the statute-book of his kingdom, in order to discover what a church really is, and what those arrangements are, which the Lord Jesus has instituted for the regulation of his house.

It is to be observed, however, that the investigation of this subject is prosecuted, in most cases, under many disadvantages. It frequently happens, that the inquirer has much to unlearn ere he can arrive at the truth. Before he can proceed with safety, he requires to settle the scriptural meaning of the very terms which he is re-

cessitated to employ; and to do this properly, he must lay aside not a few of his early prejudices, and must for the time, keep out of view opinions and practices, of the correctness and propriety of which he has never been led to entertain a doubt. In examining the New Testament, for example, with the view of ascertaining the scriptural import of the word *church*, he will find that that important term has, during the lapse of time, materially changed its signification, and that ideas have been attached to it in modern days widely different from those which it was employed to express in the apostolic age. He will search in vain for any passage in the inspired record, in which the word is used to denote the *building* in which Christians assembled for the worship of God; as if a church were an edifice composed of stones and timber. A church of Christ is always distinguished by the New Testament writers from the *house* in which believers met for the celebration of divine ordinances.—Rom. xvi. 5.; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15. And the inquirer will find himself equally unsuccessful in his search for a passage in which the word is employed to denote *ecclesiastical rulers;* as if a church, and the office-bearers of a church, were phrases of synonymous import. The term is never used by the sacred writers to denote persons in office, viewed apart from the people. Nor is there a solitary text to be met with in the New Testament in which the term is employed to designate the *body of believers in a given district or province, or country,* comprising a variety of congregations. We never read of the *church* of Judea, the *church* of Galatia, the *church* of Macedonia, &c. The sacred penmen, when referring to the societies of believers in a given locality, uniformly employ the plural, and write, the *churches* of Judea, the *churches* of Galatia, the *churches* of Macedonia, &c. —1 Thess. ii. 14; Gal. i. 2-22; 2 Cor. viii. 1.

The use of the term in question in these different acceptations may, at first sight appear to be of little importance; but when we consider the powerful influ-

ence which the ideas attached to words exerts over our views of divine truth, we cannot be sufficiently on our guard against departing from the scriptural import of the expressions we employ. It is a well-known fact, that the attaching of such ideas to the word under consideration, as those which have been specified, has had the effect of conveying a very erroneous impression of what a church of Christ really is, and of occasioning no little confusion of thought in reference to a subject which is depicted with such admirable clearness and simplicity in the pages of the New Testament.

In that portion of the sacred volume, the term occurs only in a two-fold acceptation. It denotes, either one society of believers meeting together in one place for the observance of divine ordinances, 1 Cor. i. 2, compared with chap. v. 4; 1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1; or it denotes the whole body of believers in heaven and on earth —Eph. i. 22; v. 25-30; Heb. xii. 23. In the one or the other of these two senses, it will be found that the word church is uniformly employed by the sacred writers. If the candid inquirer has any doubt as to the correctness of this statement, he may easily satisfy himself by an examination of all the passages in the New Testament in which the term occurs.

By a church of Christ, then, we are to understand a society of believers assembling in one place in obedience to his authority, for the observance of the appointed ordinances. Now, in endeavoring to answer the important question, What is a church of Christ? we have only to inquire what were the leading characteristics of those churches that were planted by the apostles, and of the constitution and order of which, an account is given in the inspired record. These primitive societies were established by the authority of Jesus Christ, as the exalted King and Head of his people; and all their affairs were regulated by his accredited ambassadors. They were designed as model churches for all coming generations; and all Christian societies that are ambitious of being

regarded as "followers of the churches which in Judea were in Christ Jesus," must copy this apostolic pattern. The reader is earnestly solicited to attend to the following, as a few of the principal characteristics of the churches in the primitive times :—

I. The churches constituted by the apostles were composed exclusively of persons who made a *credible profession of conversion to God.*

This was the only term of communion in the apostolic age. When an individual discovered a competent acquaintance with the simple elements of the gospel, and professed to feel the power of the truth on his soul, if there was nothing in his deportment inconsistent with such a profession, he was at once admitted to Christian fellowship. The order observed in all cases of admission, was, first to believe on Christ with the heart, and then to confess him with the mouth—to give themselves first to the Lord, and then to his people by the will of God. It was regarded as a self-evident truth, that Christ's ordinances were for Christ's people; and the door was carefully shut against all who did not furnish evidence of having undergone a saving change. Such a thing as a promiscuous admission of converted and unconverted persons to the fellowship of churches, was utterly unknown in apostolic times.

From the account which the evangelist Luke has given in the Acts of the Apostles, of the formation of the early churches, we learn, that those only who professed to have embraced the Gospel, and to have experienced the regenerating power of divine grace, were recognized as disciples, and received into communion. The church at Jerusalem, the first constituted of the primitive societies, was composed of persons who had "gladly received the word" which was spoken by Peter, and who had cordially believed the divine testimony; Acts ii. 37-47. In a subsequent part of the narrative, the churches in Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, are represented as "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy-Ghost,"

—language which clearly teaches, that they were composed of persons regenerated by the grace of God, and enjoying the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit; Acts ix. 31. When churches were formed at Cesarea, at Ephesus, at Philippi, at Thessalonica, at Berea, at Corinth, &c., it is obvious, that those only were associated together in the fellowship of the gospel who afforded credible evidence of conversion to God; Acts x. 44-48, &c.

This is evident also, from the terms which the apostles employed in addressing the churches. Paul, in writing to the church of God which was at Corinth, addressed that body as persons who were "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," 1 Cor. i. 2. The church at Ephesus he termed "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus." Eph. i. 1. To the church at Colosse he wrote in similar language, calling them "Saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus," Col. i. 2. The church of the Thessalonians he represents as being "in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. i. 1. These various forms of expression clearly convey the idea that the apostle regarded the persons to whom the epistles were addressed as savingly converted to God. If the phraseology which he employs does not denote this, it is difficult to conceive what words he could have selected that would have conveyed the idea more distinctly.

It is obvious that purity of fellowship constituted a distinguished feature in the character of the primitive societies. All who cordially embraced the truth, and afforded evidence of having become "new creatures in Christ Jesus," were welcomed to the enjoyment of Christian ordinances. All others were carefully debarred from the society of the faithful. There was then a thorough separation between the church and the world. There doubtless crept in occasionally among the churches individuals whose principles were not sound, and whose hearts were not right with God, such as Simon Magus, and the incestuous person in Corinth; but as soon as their real

character was discovered, they were separated from the company of the disciples ;* 1 Cor. v. 13.

It is manifest, therefore, that a church of Christ is a society composed exclusively of believers—of individuals who, by a walk and conversation in harmony with the profession which they make, afford credible evidence of having passed from death unto life. And a very little consideration will serve to convince us, that such churches only are fitted to answer the ends for which Christian societies are constituted. What are those ends? They are constituted for the two-fold object of promoting their own edification and progress in the divine life, and for advancing the cause of the Redeemer in the world around by their efforts and prayers. Hence they are commanded to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," to "walk in love," to "let the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom," that they may "grow up to him in all things, who is the head, even Christ;" and they are solemnly enjoined to "let their light so shine before men, that they seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in Heaven;"—to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the world of life,"—directions which can be attended to only by those who have experienced the power of the gospel on their souls.

II. In apostolic times, *the office-bearers of the churches were chosen by the whole body of the members.*

This was one of the peculiar privileges which the early Christians enjoyed. It was a privilege granted by the King of Zion; and no one, in the primitive age, ever attempted to take it from them. Even the apostles themselves, great as were the powers with which they were

* See this subject treated at greater length in tract "The Table of the Lord," &c. Answers are there given to several objections that are usually urged against the views that are advocated in these pages in regard to purity of Christian fellowship—objections drawn from a mistaken interpretation of the parable of the tares—from the alleged fact, that the traitor Judas was present at the institution of the Lord's Supper—from there having been hypocrites in the primitive churches, &c.

invested, never thought of coming between the people and the objects of their choice. The selection of their "bishops and deacons" was their inalienable right.

Their manner of proceeding in the election of office-bearers is recorded by Luke, in the 6th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. When it was deemed necessary that the church at Jerusalem should select brethren for the management of their temporal affairs, that the apostles might be left at liberty to devote themselves entirely to prayer and to the ministry of the word, we are told that "they called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore brethren, look ye out from among you seven men, of honest report, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, whom we may appoint over this business." This proposal was cordially approved of by the whole body of the people, and they chose seven brethren to the office of the deaconship, whom the apostles afterwards set apart to the work by prayer and the imposition of hands. It will be observed, that the apostles did not choose the deacons on that occasion—that they did not even nominate them—the matter was left in the hands of the church; and the brethren were elected by the spontaneous suffrages of the disciples. And no member of the church was excluded from the enjoyment of this privilege. All had a voice in the matter—young and old—male and female. The apostles "called the multitude of the disciples unto them," and left the business entirely in their hands. In this manner were pastors and deacons elected by the primitive saints. No man, no body of men, ever ventured to rob them of this sacred right. Such a thing as patronage, lay or clerical, was, in those days of primitive simplicity utterly unknown. The apostles deemed the people fully competent to choose their office-bearers; and they carefully abstained from interfering in the matter, farther than pointing out for their guidance the qualifications that were requisite for the

proper discharge of the duties connected with the respective offices.

As the Redeemer has committed such power into his people's hands, it is obvious, that to attempt to deprive them of this privilege, is to trample under foot the laws of the King of Zion, and to introduce customs into his churches that are at utter variance with his revealed institutions, and subversive of the liberty of his saints. Let it be observed, therefore, that the church of Christ is not only a society of persons who give credible evidence of conversion to God, but a society which possesses and enjoys, without control or interference from any quarter, the privilege of electing brethren to bear office among them.

III. In the apostolic age the *churches admitted their own members.*

It is evident from the New Testament, that the primitive societies elected, not only their pastors and deacons, but all who were received into their fellowship. Applicants were admitted, not by their pastors alone, nor by a limited number of their body delegated to undertake that department of spiritual duty, but by the church as a whole. By a careful investigation of the inspired record, it will be found, that a much larger body of evidence can be collected to establish the right of churches to admit their members, than to prove, that their exalted Head has committed to them the choice of their pastors. Should the reader be startled at this remark, he is requested to examine the New Testament, and he will not fail to be satisfied as to its correctness.

Were the New Testament altogether silent on the subject, and were we simply informed, that the churches of Christ, as societies of his followers, were to walk together in love and holy fellowship, and that there had been granted to them the right of choosing brethren to the pastorate and deaconship; on these grounds alone, it might reasonably be inferred, that the Lord Jesus intended

his churches to possess the privilege of admitting persons to their fellowship. In the first place, it will be readily admitted, that there can be no fellowship [illegible] the name in churches that is not based on christian confidence. Now it is evident, that there can be no confidence but such as springs from the knowledge of [illegible]. In order that such knowledge and confidence may be possessed, it is necessary that the members of a church should be acquainted with the principles which those who apply for admission into their communion hold, and of the profession which they make, and should be satisfied as to the scripturalness of their principles, and the genuineness of that profession. Without such satisfaction there can be no confidence and no fellowship. It follows, therefore, that in order to the enjoyment of fellowship in christian churches, all connected with them must have a voice in the admission of their members. This is equally obvious from the fact, that the churches of Christ possess the privilege of electing their pastors and deacons. It will be allowed, that to judge of the qualifications of office-bearers, is attended with greater difficulty, and requires a superior amount of discrimination than to judge of the profession of candidates for fellowship. It is easy to see then, that if members of churches are competent for the greater duty, they cannot be viewed as incompetent for discharging the less.

We have been proceeding on the assumption, that nothing is revealed in the New Testament on the subject; but this is far from being the case. That persons were admitted into the early churches by the whole body of the people, is evident from what is stated in the Acts of the Apostles respecting the admission of Paul to the fellowship of the church in Jerusalem. We are told that on intimating his desire to unite with them, they demurred, and refused to receive him, till Barnabas produced proof of the genuineness of his conversion; Acts ix. 26. The manner in which the incestuous person was received back to the communion of the church at Corinth, after having

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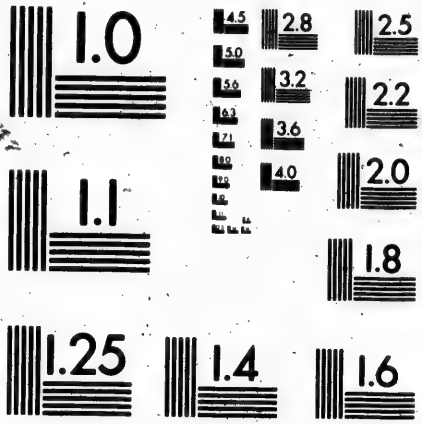


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afforded satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of his repentance, may by referred to as a further proof of this. He had been excluded by the church when assembled together for that purpose; and the apostle gave directions for his restoration in the same manner. This reception was the deed, not of the brethren in office, but of the whole body of the membership.

Nothing is explicitly stated in the New Testament as to the exact *mode* in which admissions to churches took place. It is evident, that while the whole church had a voice in the admission of those who were received into communion, all the members could not personally examine each individual applicant. Nor was this necessary; all that was requisite was, that satisfactory evidence should be afforded that those applying for fellowship had undergone a saving change; and that might in all cases be obtained by the testimony of two or three witnesses. In whatever way such evidence was obtained, one thing is certain, that the members of the church had as much to do in the admission of persons to their fellowship as in the choice of their pastors and deacons.

IV. Another duty to which the churches in primitive times carefully attended, was *the exercise of discipline on offending brethren.*

This matter was not left in the hands of their office-bearers; all cases of discipline were conducted by the people themselves. In the law which our Lord promulgated respecting the treatment of offences, specific directions are given on this subject. If the offending brother refuse to listen to the admonitions that are administered to him in private, the party offended is directed to take with him one or two more, with the view of endeavouring to bring the offender to a proper sense of his conduct; and if he still refuse to acknowledge his fault, the matter is, through the medium of the pastor, to be laid before the church, that is, the society with which the parties are connected. They are to deal with him as one who has

violated the laws of Christ. If he manifest signs of repentance, he is to be restored to confidence and retained in fellowship; but if he refuse to hear the church—if he refuse to submit—he is to be regarded "as a heathen man and a publican," that is, excommunicated. From all this it is very obvious, that the Lord Jesus enjoins discipline in the churches to be exercised by the body of the people; Matt. xviii. 15—17.

The case of the wicked person in the church of Corinth, already referred to, renders it very evident, that the Head of the church intended his people to exercise discipline on those connected with them who violated his laws. Paul, acting under his authority, solemnly enjoined the church at Corinth to put away from them the ungodly man: "In the name of the Lord Jesus, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus, to deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.....Put away from among yourselves that wicked person;" 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 13. This was addressed, it will be observed, not to the pastors or office-bearers of the church merely, but to the church as a whole. When met together in the name of Christ, *they* were to put away the wicked man. Hence we are told in the second Epistle, that the punishment—the sentence of excommunication—was "inflicted by *the many*," that is, by the body of the people; 2 Cor. ii. 6. These passages clearly teach, that when discipline is to be exercised in a church of Christ, it is to be exercised, not by the office-bearers, acting as the representatives of the rest, but by the church at large. For the purpose, as it were, of preventing a few from engrossing the business to themselves, they are commanded to do it themselves, and in their public assembly.

This is not the place for entering on a discussion respecting the proper mode of conducting the discipline of a church—a subject, it must be admitted, of vast importance;—we have to do at present simply with the fact, that discipline is to be exercised on offending brethren,

not by the rulers or representatives of a church, but by the people themselves. While it is their duty to receive members into their fellowship, it is equally their duty to separate from their communion those who act inconsistently with the profession they have made, and who refuse to yield obedience to the laws of Christ. This is a matter, be it recollected, in which every member of a church is concerned. It is the bounden duty of all to seek the purity of Christ's house. It ought never to be forgotten, that it is impossible for a church to maintain their christian character, or their relation to Christ, if they, collectively or individually, permit with impunity the open, undisguised violation of the divine law. The solemn command is, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" 2 Cor. vi. 14.

V. The only other feature in the character of the apostolic churches to [redacted] we shall at present refer is this:—It is obvious from [redacted] New Testament that *those churches supported their pastors by voluntary contributions, and that they neither desired the alliance, nor submitted in religious matters to the control, of political governments.*

The law of Christ on the subject of pastoral support is explicitly laid down in the inspired record. On sending forth his disciples to preach the gospel, he told them that their temporal necessities were to be supplied by those who should enjoy the benefit of their labours. "The labourer," said he, "is worthy of his hire;" Luke x. 7. "The Lord hath ordained," said Paul to the believing Corinthians, "that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel;" 1 Cor. ix. 14. And in language still more explicit, he states the law of the King of Zion, in reference to this subject, when writing to the Galatians: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things;" Gal. vi. 6. There are few parts of that code of laws which the Lord Jesus has pro-

mulgated for regulating the affairs of his kingdom, so clear as that which has respect to the support of his servants. He has made full provision for the supply of their temporal wants, by teaching them to depend on the liberality of those to whom they minister. His injunctions on this subject are binding on all his followers; and nothing can set them aside but his own authority. So long as these statutes remain unrepealed, it is the duty of those who minister in holy things to depend on the churches for their support; and it is the duty of the churches to minister to their necessities.

That the churches in apostolic times yielded obedience to this equitable law, few will venture to dispute. Their Lord had taught them in explicit terms, that his "kingdom was not of this world"—that it was spiritual in its nature, its subjects, its laws, its institutions—that his people were not to seek the alliance of political governments—and that his servants were to be maintained by those who enjoyed the benefit of their ministrations. It never occurred to the primitive saints that they were to look beyond themselves for the support of the Christian cause. The idea of an alliance with the kingdoms of this world, with the view of giving an increased stability to Christianity, and of more effectually promoting the evangelization of the earth, we venture to say, never entered into the mind of apostle, or preacher, or [illegible], in the primitive age. It is a well-known fact, that for the first three hundred years, the churches of Christ existed apart from all political governments, and that they prospered and triumphed wherever the standard of the cross was reared. The people of God, during that period, were reproached, and oppressed, and persecuted—every scheme which the ingenuity of man could devise was put in operation to arrest the progress of the Christian cause—that was opposed by the learning of sages, by the superstition of the multitude, and by all the craft and power of statesmen and rulers—and yet it flourished and prevailed;—a triumphant proof, one would think, of the perfect efficiency of the vo-

luntary principle, and a manifest token, that during that time of mighty minds and hearts, the soldiers of the cross enjoyed the approving smile of their exalted Lord. It was then proved that the cause of the Redeemer requires no extraneous aid for its support—that Christianity has within itself a strength and a prowess that is able to bear down all opposition—and that, unaided and alone, with nothing to depend on but the almighty arm of its Founder, and the zeal and energy of its friends, it is fitted to promote the present and eternal well-being of the human race. It *needs* nothing from statesmen or earthly rulers, it *asks* nothing from them but to let it alone. Strange is it, that with the law of Christ in reference to the support of his servants so clearly and explicitly unfolded in the pages of the New Testament, and the great fact, that christianity flourished and triumphed in the very commencement of its career, not only without the assistance of political governments, but while encountering the most strenuous and determined opposition which it was in their power to put forth—strange is it, that with these laws and this wonderful fact before them, any of the Redeemer's followers should have ever harboured a doubt as to the efficiency of the voluntary principle to maintain his cause in the earth, and should court an alliance with the kingdoms of this world, with the view of strengthening and promoting that cause. The primitive saints were better taught—their faith was stronger—and *it will be vain, we think, to look for the piety, and the purity, and resistless might of primitive christianity, until the followers of Christ shall have better learned, not only to maintain the Headship of the Redeemer in his kingdom, but, in religious matters, to stand aloof entirely from the kingdoms of this world, and to fight the battles of the faith with those spiritual weapons with which He has furnished them.*

It will be observed that, in these pages we have endeavoured to show, that the churches constituted by the apostles, and intended to serve as models for christian societies in all coming ages, were composed exclusively of

persons who made a credible profession of conversion to God—that the members of those churches enjoyed the privilege of choosing their pastors and deacons—that applicants for fellowship were admitted to communion, and discipline exercised on offending brethren, not by a number of individuals with delegated authority for that purpose, but by the whole body of the people—and that those churches supported their pastors by voluntary contributions, and neither desired the alliance, nor submitted in religious matters to the control of political governments. The views which have thus been advanced respecting the nature and constitution of the apostolic churches, the reader is requested carefully to examine. They may, perhaps, run counter to the notions which he has hitherto been led to entertain, in reference to the subject; but let him lay aside all his preconceived opinions—let him endeavour to shake off the trammels of human authority and human systems—let him keep out of view what this man, or that body of men, thinks about the matter—and let him come, as an humble inquirer, to the word of God, with the view of ascertaining what the Lord Jesus has made known respecting his kingdom. If the views advocated in these pages, after being carefully compared with the standard of truth, do not appear to be taught in the Scriptures, by all means let them be rejected; but, if it be found, after diligent investigation, that they are in harmony with what God has revealed in his word, none of his people may reject them with impunity. Let the believing reader prayerfully examine the matter, and let him not hesitate to follow out his conscientious convictions.

Let it remembered, that the subject which has passed under review is not a matter of indifference. Scriptural views of the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom are inseparably connected with the advancement of his cause in the earth. *It is impossible*, on the other hand, *to estimate the amount of injury that has accrued to Christianity from the want of purity of fellowship in*

*churches*—the depriving Christ's people of their inalienable right to conduct the affairs of his house—and from the unhallowed alliance between Christianity and the kingdoms of this world. The Lord Jesus intended his churches to be the medium through which blessings should be conveyed to our lost and perishing race. It is in connexion with their piety, and purity, and zeal, that the earth is to be evangelized. In primitive times they shone as lights in the world, and held forth the word of life to guide men to the haven of eternal rest. And the glorious effects that followed are well known;—the word of God ran, and had free course, and was glorified; and untold myriads were brought under the power of the truth. Then the church of Christ was pure; then his people were free; then there was no dependence on an arm of flesh. But how different the state of matters now! Multitudes who name the name of Christ do not depart from iniquity; promiscuous assemblages of converted and unconverted people are seen crowding to the table of the Lord; privileges which the Saviour intended all his followers to enjoy, are monopolized by a few; and there is on the part of many, an eager grasping after the pomp and glitter of a state establishment. And what has been the effect? The way of truth has been evil spoken of—a false representation has been given of the christian system—weapons have been put into the hands of infidelity—the cause of Christ has been retarded in its progress—the name of God has been dishonoured among men—and souls have been ruined for ever. Evils these truly of no common magnitude; and yet these evils may all be traced to unscriptural views of the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom, and to a departure from the purity that distinguished the churches in apostalic times. Surely, surely, it is high time that this subject should receive the degree of attention, which its paramount importance demands. Let human systems of ecclesiastical polity be discarded—let the Bible alone be adopted as the standard of religious truth—let christian societies be formed after the model of those churches that were planted by apostolic men; then, and not till then, will Zion appear in her strength and beauty, and the cause of God be triumphant in the earth.

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# THE LORD'S SUPPER;

## ITS NATURE AND DESIGN.

THE account given by the sacred writers of the institution of the Lord's Supper is to the following effect: "The Lord Jesus, the night in which he was betrayed, as he and his apostles were eating the Passover, took bread, and blessed, or gave thanks, and gave it to the disciples, saying—Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: This do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup; and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying—Drink ye all of it; for this cup is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you—for the remission of the sins of many: This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me: For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

The symbols which the heavenly Saviour thus directs his people to employ, in commemorating his dying love, are bread and wine; the one designed to represent his body, and the other his blood. The bread was broken, to indicate that he was to be "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;" and the wine was poured out, to shew that his blood was to be shed for the redemption of ruined man. His disciples, in breaking the bread and drinking the wine, were taught to view their sins as the procuring cause of the Redeemer's sufferings, and to contemplate his atoning death as the sole ground of acceptance with God, and as the only source of peace, and comfort, and joy. It is of no little importance clearly to understand the import of these simple but significant emblems—to apprehend distinctly the great truths which,

when sitting at the table of the Lord, they are intended to impress upon our minds. Many, it is to be feared, even of the genuine followers of Christ, approach the Lord's table with very inadequate and unscriptural views of the nature of the ordinance. It needs not therefore excite our surprise that they fail in obtaining that comfort and spiritual improvement which the proper observance of the sacred supper is designed and fitted to impart. They approach this blessed well of salvation with an eager desire to obtain large draughts of its soul-satisfying waters, and they return from it again and again in the bitterness of disappointment.

Not a few, for instance, appear to imagine that a change takes place upon the bread and wine when the Lord's Supper is observed, and that it is in consequence of this change that believers derive benefit from the ordinance. This notion has had the effect of surrounding the institution with an air of deep and awful mystery. It is the origin of the Popish dogma of transubstantiation. The Roman Catholics, as every one knows, imagine that the bread and wine that are employed at the celebration of the Eucharist are really turned into the body and blood of the Lord—an idea so absurd, so entirely opposed to Scripture, to reason, and to common sense, that one cannot help expressing astonishment, that it should have obtained so long and so extensively among mankind.

The practice of consecrating the bread and wine that are used at the Lord's table—of "setting them apart from a common to a holy use"—is fitted to convey a very erroneous idea of the nature of the ordinance. This practice is derived from an expression that occurs in the account which is given in the New Testament of the institution of the Supper. The Evangelist Matthew informs us, that, "as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed *it*." Mat. xxvi. 26. It has been inferred from this, that the bread is to be consecrated. But the reader, on consulting the passage, will observe, that the pronoun

*it* is in italics, which indicates that there is no corresponding term in the original language. All that Matthew avers, therefore, is, that Jesus took bread and *blessed*. By the word "blessed" is meant merely the giving of thanks. This is rendered apparent by the following verse, where it is said, that "he took the cup and gave thanks." Our Saviour did not bless the bread and the wine—he did not consecrate them—he did not set them apart from a common to a sacred use; he simply presented thanksgiving to the LORD. That this is the legitimate meaning of the word, is evident also, from the account which Paul gives of the ordinance in the eleventh chapter of 1st Corinthians, v. 23–28. If those who cast their eye over these pages, will take the trouble to consult the passage by turning to it in their Bibles, they will not fail to be satisfied that the term "bless" means simply the giving of thanks. The truth is, there is not one word said in the New Testament about blessing the elements: the blessing of the elements, therefore, is an addition that has been made by man—it is a something that men have superadded to the simple institution. The bread and wine that are used at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper are the very same as the bread and wine that are left. There is no consecration in the matter.

The ordinance of the Supper is a *commemorative* rite; and the bread and wine are merely the memorials of the Saviour's dying love. There is nothing in these symbols themselves that is possessed of the least efficacy. They are merely helps to our faith, they assist our spiritual vision, they aid us in calling to remembrance the wonders of redeeming mercy—the closing scenes of the Saviour's history—his excruciating agonies—his atoning death. "Do this in remembrance of me," is the dying command of Jesus to all his followers. 'Take your places around my Table—take into your hands the memorials of my dying love—think of all that I have done and suffered for your redemption—of the wounds and bruises to which I

was subjected for your sakes—think of my untold agonies in the Garden and on the Cross—all which were endured that you might be delivered from sin, and hell, and wrath, and introduced to the enjoyment of eternal blessedness in the sanctuary above.' The bread and wine that are employed in the celebration of the sacred Supper are thus to be received as the memorials of redeeming love, and nothing more.

The Lord's Supper being simply a commemorative institution, it is very improperly designated a *Sacrament*, as the term is calculated to convey rather an erroneous idea of its nature. This word is improper on various accounts. In the first place, it is not *scriptural;* it is not to be found in the Bible. The only forms of expression that are employed in the New Testament to designate this ordinance are,—"the Lord's Supper,"—"the breaking of bread." 1 Cor. xi. 20. Acts ii. 42; and xx. 7. It is of very great importance to adhere as closely as possible to Scripture phraseology in the names that are given to the institutions of Christianity. Much injury has arisen from the neglect of this; and not a few of the mistaken notions that obtain on religious subjects are to be traced to the use of unscriptural terms. Words, it is true, are but names; but then, it is to be recollected, that very erroneous ideas are frequently attached to words; and hence arises the danger. But there is a stronger objection than even this to the use of the term Sacrament as a designation of this ordinance. The word literally signifies an oath; being the name that was given to the oath that was administered to the ancient Roman soldiery on entering the army of the Commonwealth. Now, there is nothing that bears the most distant analogy to this in the Lord's Supper. No oath is administered, no oath is taken. There is something, indeed, that has resemblance to an oath in the ideas that are frequently attached to the ordinance. It is no uncommon thing to hear people speak about the *vows* that are made at the Lord's table.

Now, the practice of vowing in connection with this ordinance, has its origin in the term Sacrament. Many who cast their eye over these pages will be ready to ask, Are vows at the table of the Lord to be viewed as improper? The question is answered by proposing another. Is the practice of vowing at the Lord's table *scriptural?* Is it countenanced by the New Testament? Is there one word said about it in the accounts that are given there of the institution of the Supper? If so, where? Let the reader search and examine for himself. He will not find the shadow of an allusion to any thing of the kind. But it may be asked, Do you regard all holy resolutions to serve the Lord as unlawful and improper? By no means. But why connect these with the Lord's Supper, and confine them to this ordinance? It is this that we deem improper and unscriptural; it is this that is fitted to give an erroneous idea of the nature of the ordinance, to hold it forth to view, as if it were something more than a *commemorative* rite. It is of unspeakable moment distinctly to understand that a believer does not enter on an engagement to be the Lord's at his table; that engagement was made before he approached the table. The engagement is made at conversion. When the sinner is awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger, and turns his eye to the Cross of Christ as the source of pardon, and peace, and joy, he devotes himself to the service of the heavenly Saviour, and determines, through the strength of divine grace, to live to his glory in the world. It is then he solemnly resolves to live, not to himself, but to him who loved him, and gave himself for his salvation. When he appears at the Lord's table he appears as a professed servant of Jesus, and earnestly prays that he may be strengthened to continue in the ways of righteousness. He makes no vow; but meditates on the dying love of his Lord, that he may learn to hate sin with more perfect hatred, and devote the remainder of his days to the glory of him who hath called him out of darkness into his marvellous light.

It is obvious, then, that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, when divested of the trappings which men have thrown around it, is an institution that is distinguished for its admirable simplicity. But beautifully simple as is the institution itself, the objects which it is intended to serve are of the noblest and most important nature. It bears a striking analogy in this respect to all the other arrangements connected with the Christian economy. In these the most sublime and magnificent ends are accomplished by the simplest means. What can be simpler, for example, than the way which God has appointed for sinners to obtain salvation through Christ? It is neither more nor less than the belief of his own testimony concerning his Son. "Believe and live," is "Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan." How grand, how magnificent the object—the salvation of unnumbered myriads of the ruined and apostate family of man! How unutterably simple the means—the belief of the truth concerning Jesus! In the Lord's Supper we discover the same beautiful simplicity blended with the same magnificence of design.

1. The ordinance of the Supper is intended to serve as a *memorial of Christ's dying love.* The sacred command, in obedience to which believers approach the table of their Lord, implies that their hearts are apt to be occupied with other objects, and to forget him who loved them and died for their salvation. This may appear very improbable; but it is too true. Can it be that those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious—who have rested their hopes for eternity on his finished work—who derive all their peace, and hope, and joy, from his precious blood;—can it be that *they* should forget their redeeming God? Strange it must appear to angels: to the young disciple, who is experiencing all the glow and fervour of his first love, it will appear impossible; but all who have spent any length of time in the divine life have felt it to be true. They lament it—they mourn over it; but they

feel a constant proneness to forget their Lord. Depravity, though subdued, is not eradicated,—the world, with its cares, and temptations, and enchantments, often draws their eye from the Cross,—and Satan employs all his wiles to lead them from the Saviour. Jesus knew all this, and he provided for it. "Do this," said he, "in remembrance of me:" "Take into your hands the memorials of my dying love—call to remembrance my sufferings and death—think of Gethsemane and of Calvary —and let my matchless love be constantly present to your minds."

"He knows what wand'ring hearts we have,
Apt to forget his lovely face;
And to refresh our minds he gave
Those kind memorials of his grace."

Believers when celebrating this sacred ordinance, approach, as it were, within sight of the Cross; by the eye of faith they obtain a glimpse of the suffering Saviour; the symbols of his broken body and shed blood bring vividly to their recollection what he endured for their sake. These are times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord: Jesus makes himself known to them in the breaking of bread; his blessed Spirit takes of the things that are his, and shows them to their souls; and hallowed is the communion which they are privileged to hold with their Divine Lord. Then they feel that they are not their own—they feel that Christ has loved them with an everlasting love—they feel that they are his for ever.—This, then, is one glorious design of the institution of the sacred Supper, to keep the followers of Jesus in remembrance of his love in dying for their salvation.

2. The Lord's Supper is intended also to serve, as *a means of spiritual growth to believers.* The work of sanctification is carried on in their souls through the instrumentality of the truth; but, in order that the truth may sanctify, it must be exhibited to the mind. In the ordinance of the Supper it is presented through the medium

of the symbols that are employed; and what is so well fitted to promote the life of godliness in the soul as the truths that are vividly brought before the mind at the table of the Lord? The lesson of holiness is best learned at the foot of the Cross; it is there that we are taught to contemplate sin as the cause of the Redeemer's woes; it is there that we learn the paramount importance of holiness, and feel the power of the love of Christ sweetly constraining us to live, not to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again. Believers in every age have appreciated the Lord's Supper as a most precious means of advancement in the Christian life. When sitting at the Lord's table, they have beheld sin to be indeed exceeding sinful; they have seen the emptiness of the world; and their hearts have been impressed with the paramount importance of a holy life.

6. The Lord's Supper is designed also as *a manifestation of the union that subsists among the followers of the Lamb.* It is to the exhibition of this blessed union that Paul refers when he says,—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Believers who are united together in the fellowship of the gospel are here represented as the body of Christ. This beautiful image indicates the close and endearing relationship that subsists among them. Christ himself is their head—from him they derive all their strength and all their nourishment; and without him they can do nothing; and they are joined together by the closest ties. Love is the life-blood that circulates through the system; it flows through every vein, and gives strength to every member.

This oneness of soul is never so powerfully felt by the followers of Christ as when they sit down together at the table of their common Lord, and with the memorials of

his love in their hands, meditate on the wonders of redeeming mercy. They feel that they are one in him; and this union the sacred Supper is designed to shew to the world. When they sit down together at Christ's table, it is a public manifestation of its reality.

If the Lord's Supper be thus intended as an exhibition of the union that subsists among the people of God, two inferences of very great importance necessarily follow, to which we invite the diligent and prayerful attention of the believing reader. The first is, that *none but those who have been converted to God should sit down at Christ's table.* The second is, that *those Christian societies only, whose members walk together in love and harmony, can observe, in a Scriptural manner, the ordinance of the Supper.*

4. Another great object which the Lord's Supper is intended to serve, is, *the exhibition of Christ's death for the salvation of men.* This we deduce from the words of Paul to the Corinthians: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." The death of Christ is to be exhibited or held up to view, not only as the source of peace and comfort, and edification to believers, but as the sole foundation of hope to the ungodly. This is accomplished by the preaching of the gospel. The preaching of Christ crucified is the grand instrument for the salvation of a ruined world. And when a church assembles to celebrate the dying love of the Lord, Jesus is set forth as the Saviour of men. Not a word may be uttered to the ungodly, but the good news are silently made known. By the bread and wine that are employed, the death of Jesus is held up to view as the ground of hope to the sinner. The church points, as it were, to the wounds which Christ received when he suffered and died as the substitute of guilty men, and to the blood flowing on Calvary; and, as they take the bread and wine into their hands, they in effect say to the ungodly, 'These are the symbols of the

broken body and shed blood of our Lord. For us he left the mansions of glory—for us he sorrowed and suffered on earth—for us he pleads in heaven—through him we have obtained the pardon of our sins and acceptance with our offended God. This all-perfect atonement, this efficacious blood, is sufficient also for your salvation. Look to him suffering on the accursed tree—look to him whom your sins have pierced, and mourn—look to him now, for he is able and willing to save to the uttermost—look to him, for why will ye die?' The gospel is thus exhibited, not only in the written word and by the living voice, but also by the significant emblems of the Saviour's sufferings; and every time the ungodly witness the celebration of the Supper of the Lord, they see him, as it were, set forth crucified before their eyes.

When we look, therefore, at the ends which the Lord's Supper is intended to serve, we see objects of the highest importance accomplished by means of the simplest possible kind. God is thereby glorified—the work of holiness is advanced in the souls of his people—and sinners are saved. When these ends are not accomplished, the failure arises, not from any defect in the institution, but from the improper manner in which it is attended to.—These glorious objects the ordinance is designed and fitted to promote; and when they are not promoted, we may rest assured there is something wrong with those who take their place at the table of the Lord.

Many, alas! it is to be feared, partake of the symbols of Christ's body and blood who have not been renewed in the spirit of their minds. They are not only ignorant of the nature of the institution and of the ends which it is designed to serve, but their hearts are not right with God; they are unpardoned and unregenerated. It needs not excite our surprise, therefore, that they should derive no benefit from the Lord's Supper; for they cannot discern the Lord's body. This ordinance is intended exclusively for the benefit of those who have tasted that the

Lord is gracious, and who feel the constraining power of redeeming love. The unbelieving and unconverted can derive no advantage from it. They may sit among the followers of Christ at his table, and take into their hands the memorials of his love; but their hearts are unsubdued; they are enemies to him in their minds. It must never be forgotten, that the Lord's Supper is a feast to which none but the Lord's people are invited. Those only who have believed the truth concerning Jesus, whose hearts have been regenerated by the Spirit of grace, and who have devoted themselves to the service of Christ, are welcome to approach the table. All others are prohibited by the King of Zion. Reader! be entreated to "examine yourself whether you be in the faith." Have you experienced a change of heart? Are you born again? Have you passed from death unto life? Have you given yourself to the Lord? If so, your Redeemer expects you to cast in your lot among his people, and to unite with them in commemorating his dying love. But, if you are still in a state of nature—if you are unconverted—O! do not dare to approach his table. By taking the symbols of his love into your hands while you are living at enmity with him, you will injure your souls—you will "eat and drink judgment to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body." If hitherto you have been in the habit of coming to Christ's table, you have thereby fearfully aggravated your guilt. O! never approach that table again, until, by believing on the Son of God, you have obtained the forgiveness of your iniquities, and have experienced that change of heart without which no sinner shall be permitted to enter the kingdom of heaven.

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# CHRIST'S DYING LOVE;

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD IT BE COMMEMORATED?

A SOUND and satisfactory answer to this question may be obtained by every Christian who takes the Bible for his standard, and appeals "to the law and to the testimony" as the only rule of faith and practice. In the investigation of this subject, in common with every other truth brought before our notice in the sacred volume, nothing more is requisite in order to arrive at a just conclusion, than an unprejudiced and prayerful attention to the revealed will of God. If the professed followers of Christ would imitate the example of the "noble" Bereans, recorded in Acts xvii. 11, in "receiving the word with all readiness of mind, and searching the scriptures daily, whether these things are so;" they would be at no loss to ascertain the mind of Christ in reference to the frequency with which he expects his people to commemorate his death.

That the Lord's Supper should be often celebrated, is manifest from the very *design* of the institution. It is intended to commemorate the dying love of the Saviour —to promote the work of grace in the souls of his people —to exhibit the blessed union that subsists among his genuine followers—and to hold up to view the death of the Son of God as the sole foundation of hope to the guilty. Now, is it not reasonable to suppose that an ordinance instituted to promote these glorious ends should be celebrated very frequently? If these be the objects which it is intended to serve, is it not palpably evident that the dying love of the Redeemer should be often, very often commemorated? Admit that the New Testament were altogether silent on the subject, that not a hint were given as to the frequency with which the ordinance

should be observed, the very fact that such important ends are intended to be accomplished by it, is sufficient to convince any candid and ingenuous inquirer, that it ought to be attended to very frequently. To celebrate the Supper seldom, therefore, is to lose sight, in a great measure, of the grand objects which it is designed and fitted to promote.

But the question is, *How* often are believers to shew forth the death of their Lord? Does the New Testament contain any precept on the subject, or any explicit directions for our guidance? There is indeed no express precept specifying, in so many words, how frequently the followers of Christ should commemorate his death. Nor is this necessary. It is well known for instance, that we have no express precept for infant baptism, nor even for the setting apart of the first day of the week as a day of sacred rest. These observances, as well as the frequency with which the ordinance of the Supper should be attended to, rest on other grounds. In regard to all such cases, the Word of God furnishes what is tantamount to a precept,—viz., *the example of the Apostolical Churches.* Everything relating to the constitution, and government, and worship of these primitive societies, was distinctly arranged by the apostles themselves, the inspired ambassadors of the Lord. Now, it must never be forgotten, that the example of these churches is absolutely imperative on all the followers of Christ—that it is as obligatory as any precept which the New Testament contains. We have only to ascertain, then, from the inspired record, how often the early believers met together for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, to settle the point. The moment this is satisfactorily established, the question will be for ever set at rest in the view of all the genuine followers of the Lamb.

In the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, v. 41—47, the sacred writer presents us with the most complete account of the worship of the first Christians which the New Testament contains. "Then they that gladly

received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . And they continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." It is obvious from this passage, that those who were admitted to the fellowship of the church at Jerusalem, diligently and conscientiously attended to the preaching of the apostles—to the "fellowship," or collections for the support of the poor—the observance of the Lord's Supper—and devotional exercises. Now, the conclusion which must obviously be deduced from this account of their worship, is, that the saints at Jerusalem attended to all these ordinances as often as they met together in a church capacity, and consequently, that the Lord's Supper was celebrated every time they assembled for the observance of divine worship. This passage, therefore, proves that the church at Jerusalem broke bread frequently. Now, it will be readily admitted, that the members of that society met together for the worship of God at least every first day of the week. Is it not evident, then, that they celebrated the sacred Supper every Lord's Day? "If the instructions of the apostles, and contribution for the necessities of the saints, were observed every Lord's Day, by what process of reasoning can it be shown that the Lord's Supper was not?"

The next passage where reference is made to the time of observing this ordinance, occurs in the 20th chapter of the Acts, at the 7th verse. "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." We are told in the preceding part of the chapter, that the apostle remained at Troas seven days on the occasion referred to, in order that he might have an opportunity of meeting with the disciples,

and of uniting with them in celebrating the dying love of the Saviour. This important fact shews, that the church at Troas were in the habit of eating the Lord's Supper only on the first day of the week. Now, the reader will observe that the grand object of their coming together every Lord's Day was the breaking of bread. Paul preached to them on the occasion; but the brethren met together for the *special purpose of breaking bread.* For this they came together every Lord's Day. The Lord's Supper, it thus appears, was the grand leading ordinance of the first day of the week; its services, therefore, would not have been complete without it. Almost all interpreters agree in this view of the passage.

In the 11th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, at the 20th verse, we meet with another very clear and satisfactory proof, that the primitive churches attended to the Lord's Supper weekly. "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." To obtain a proper view of the force of the argument that is deduced from this passage, in support of the weekly observance of the ordinance, it is necessary to bear in mind, that the church at Corinth had been in the habit of attending to it in a very improper manner, and that the grand object which Paul had in view in the latter part of the chapter, was to rectify the abuses that had crept in amongst them in regard to the manner of celebrating the Supper. The verse which has been quoted shews, that they were in the habit of attending to the ordinance every time they came together as a church, although in a very improper and unhallowed manner. Instead of simply partaking of the bread and wine, and thus commemorating the dying love of their Lord, they desecrated the ordinance by making it a common feast. The Apostle blames them for this, and points out the mode in which the Supper was to be celebrated. The fact, however, of their eating the Lord's Supper *as often as they came together in a church capacity*, renders it evident that they observed the ordinance every first day of

the week. They met together as a church for Divine service every Lord's Day; it is not possible, then, to avoid the inference, that the ordinance of the Supper formed part of their stated worship. The candid inquirer will find that he is shut up to this conclusion.

Let the reader carefully examine the three passages of scripture to which reference has been made, and he will not fail to be convinced that the primitive saints took their places around the table of the Lord every first day of the week. The weekly observance of the sacred Supper, therefore, is supported by the high authority of apostolical example. The churches whose affairs were regulated and superintended by the inspired ambassadors of Christ, viewed this ordinance as an essential part of the religious services of every Lord's Day. While they met together on that day to commemorate the glorious event of his rising from the grave, they at the same time called to remembrance his dying love, by partaking of the symbols of his broken body and shed blood. Now, let it be borne in mind, as has already been observed, that the example of the apostolical churches has the full force of the most explicit precept. Is it not clear as noon-day, therefore, that it is the duty of every Christian society that professes to be formed after the primitive model, to shew forth the Saviour's death as often as they come together for the observance of divine ordinances? And does it not follow as a necessary consequence, that those churches which neglect the weekly observance of the Supper, and which surround the Lord's table only once a month, or once a half year, are not in this respect, followers of "the Churches, which in Judea were in Christ Jesus?"

"It appears to me a fact of much importance in this argument," says a judicious writer on this subject, "that it is impossible to frame a satisfactory proof of the Divine appointment of any portion of christian worship, which does not imply that the Lord's Supper formed a part of the ordinary worship of Christians. Does any one ask

me, why along with my christian brethren, I keep the first day of the week holy, I can give no answer more satisfactory than this:—On the first day of the week the apostolical churches came together to break bread. If he ask me, why we engage in praise on these occasions, I can only reply:—Jesus, after he had observed the Lord's Supper with his disciples, sung a hymn. If he ask, why preaching or teaching forms a part of the service, my answer is:—In the apostolic church, doctrine was connected with the breaking of bread, and when the disciples at Troas came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them. If I am asked a reason for joining in prayers in the public Christian assembly, the reply is:—Prayers as well as doctrine were connected with the breaking of bread. If my warrant for making a contribution for pious purposes on such occasions is demanded, still my answer is:—Fellowship was in the primitive church an accompaniment of the Lord's Supper. But if I am asked why, when on the first day of the week we meet for doctrine, and fellowship, and prayers, we do not break bread, I am afraid no other answer can be given than this:—We do not, in this case, keep the ordinances as the apostles delivered them to us. This is the substance of the argument from the practice of the apostolical churches, and it seems to me satisfactorily to establish the obligation not only of frequent but of *weekly* communion. On the same principle on which christian churches meet without 'breaking bread,' they might meet without 'doctrine,' without 'fellowship,' and without prayers.'" *

The pious reader is affectionately urged to turn his attention to the investigation of this important subject. Let him endeavour to divest his mind of prejudice, and of preconceived opinions, and let him prayerfully consult his New Testament, with a view to ascertain how often his Saviour expects him to commemorate his dying love.

* "Hints on the Permanent Obligation and frequent Observances of the Lord's Supper," by Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh, p. 34.

No consistent follower of Christ will rest satisfied until he has ascertained what his will is in reference to this matter; and having ascertained it, nothing must deter him from the following the example of the primitive saints.

The evidence which has been thus briefly presented in favour of the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, appears to the writer of these pages to establish the scripturalness and propriety of the practice. It is not a little satisfactory, however, to know that, for the first three centuries, weekly communion was universal in the Christian church. This is the undisputed testimony of Ecclesiastical history. Indeed, it is obvious that the Lord's Supper was administered in many churches oftener than once a week, and that it formed a regular part of Divine worship every Lord's day. The reader is earnestly requested to consult Mosheim, or any other respectable Ecclesiastical historian for satisfaction upon this point.

The following account of the worship of the churches, about one hundred and thirty years after the Lord's ascension, is from the pen of Justin Martyr, who was originally a heathen philosopher, but who was converted to the faith of the Gospel, and became an able and undaunted champion of the christian cause. "On the day that is called Sunday, all the Christians meet together, because that is the day of our Saviour's resurrection, and then we have read to us the writings of the Prophets and Apostles. This done, the President makes a speech, exhorting the people to practise what they have heard. Then we all join in prayer. The bread, wine, and water, are then brought forth, and the President having again poured out prayers and praise to God, there is a distribution and commemoration made of the sacramental elements. Last of all, those that are willing and able contribute what they think fit for the relief of the indigent." Is not this a striking commentary on the beautifully simple account which Luke gives of the worship of the church at Jerusalem? "They continued steadfastly in the Apos-

tles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." In the account which Mosheim gives of the religious observances of the church in the fourth century, he states, that "the christian worship consisted in hymns, prayers, the reading of the scriptures, and a discourse addressed to the people, and *concluded with the celebration of the Lord's Supper.*" *

The following eloquent passage shows us the impression which the evidence from antiquity made on a strong-minded minister of the Church of Scotland, in which the practice of weekly communion is far from obtaining:—"Consider antiquity in what view you please, the older or the later accounts; consider it among enemies or friends; view it in its truth or in its lies; in its simplicity or in its superstitions;—consider all the accounts which all sorts of men have given; take the evidence from as distant corners of the world, and as opposite characters in it as you please, from those who have no bias but to the truth, or from such whose opinions and interests would lead them to give this fact a colour if it could bear it—and all with one voice shall declare, that to come together on the first day of the week to break bread, was from the beginning and for many ages, the custom, the uninterrupted, unquestioned, undisputed practice of all christian churches:—as much so as it was their practice to sanctify the Lord's day, or to pay, praise and preach the apostles' doctrine upon it:—that as this was the most distinguishing part of their worship, so was it what they and their worship were described by, and the action by which among themselves the Lord's day was known; what consequently they would least and last of all have omitted, while any degree of the purity of the gospel remained among them. How strongly does all this place the matter before us! How clearly does this appear as the light from the scriptures! And when all antiquity reflects it too in so direct a manner to us, what can we do

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. 4. Chap. iv. Sec. 3.

but confess it as a part of the truth coming from Christ, that it is his will and our duty to continue stedfastly in the breaking of bread, often doing this in remembrance of him."*

It would be unwarrantable to exalt the evidence that is derived from Ecclesiastical history to the level with the evidence which has been deduced from the pages of the New Testament; but it has a tendency to confirm our confidence in the scripturalness of weekly communion, to find that the churches of Christ, for hundreds of years after his abode on earth, attended to the ordinances every first day of the week.

Although we should studiously guard against building our faith on any thing short of the plain and obvious testimony of the Word of God; it is satisfactory and interesting to know the opinions which pious men, in different ages of the church, have entertained in regard to the frequency with which the Lord's Supper should be celebrated. It is well known that Calvin made a strenuous effort to introduce weekly communion into the churches of Geneva; but the prejudice against it was so strong that he succeeded no farther than in prevailing on the people to attend to the ordinance once a month. That Luther was of the same mind with Calvin on this point may be inferred from the fact that the Lutheran churches have a communion every Sunday, and holiday, throughout the year. The sentiments of Cranmer, and the other founders of the English church, were precisely the same, as provision is there made for the celebration of the Lord's Supper every Lord's day in all the Cathedral churches. Knox, who imbibed his theological principles from the Genevan Reformer, was very anxious, on his return to Scotland, to prevail on his countrymen to communicate at least monthly. His efforts for the attainment of this object, although at first successful, ended in the establishment of *quarterly* communion, a practice which obtained

* Randall on the Lord's Supper.

in the Church of Scotland, until the days of the persecution under the Second Charles, when the privilege of communicating so frequently could not be enjoyed. Several of the most famous of the Puritan and Non-conformist divines, such as Dr. Ames, Dr. Owen, Mr. Baxter, Dr. Goodwin, Mr. Charnock, &c. advocated the practice of weekly communion.

To come nearer our own time. The late pious and excellent Willison of Dundee, in his "Sacramental Directory," stated it as his firm and decided conviction, that the Lord's Supper should be dispensed every Lord's day. Dr. Erskine of Edinburgh, one of the brightest ornaments of the Church of Scotland, in his "Theological Dissertations," advocated most strenuously the propriety of the weekly observance of the Supper. The venerable John Brown of Haddington, whose praise is in all the churches, deeply lamented the unfrequency with which the Lord's Supper was attended to in his day, and wrote a valuable little Treatise on this subject, in which he showed that weekly communion is consistent with the practice of the primitive churches. The late Dr. Mason, an eminent Presbyterian minister in New York, in his admirable 'Letters on Frequent Communion," pleads most eloquently for the weekly observance of the Supper, and feelingly laments the want of it among so many of the churches. In one of these letters he very strikingly remarks:—

"Were Paul to rise from his rest, and to visit our churches, one of the first things he would miss, would be the communion table. What would be our confusion were he to address us in inquiries like these: 'How often do you remember your Redeemer in the Sacramental Feast? Every Sabbath? Every other Sabath? Every third Sabbath? Every month?' Alas, no. This was never heard nor thought of among us—'How often, then?' Oh, I feel the rising blush—but the shameful truth must come out! 'Generally, not more than twice in the year.' What astonishment would seize the Apostle?—He would hardly own us for disciples! Is this, christian

brethren, our kindness to our friend? This our reverence for his injunction, our return for his love? We are verily guilty concerning our brother. It behoves us to rouse from our lethargy; to throw ourselves abashed at his feet; to implore his forgiveness; to evince our sincerity by confessing our fault; and no longer disobey him, and forsake our own mercies."

It must not be forgotten, that the opinions of the eminent Divines, to whose views of the frequency with which the Lord's Supper should be celebrated reference has just been made, do not of themselves constitute a legitimate basis for the practice of weekly communion. Our only authority for this, or any other part of Divine worship, is the testimony of the Word of God—the example of the apostolical churches. It has a tendency, however, to confirm our confidence in the accuracy of the sentiments which we have imbibed from the Sacred Volume, when we find them coinciding with the views of those who have been eminent for piety, and learning, and usefulness among the churches of Christ.

The New Testament appears, then, clearly to teach, that it is the duty of all the followers of Christ to commemorate his dying love every first day of the week. It is very evident that the primitive believers came together every Lord's Day for the express purpose of breaking bread, and it is as evident that every church of Christ should assign to the Lord's Supper a very prominent place in the worship of every christian Sabbath. It is not left to our option to attend to this ordinance or to neglect it, as may suit our convenience or inclination; the Lord Jesus expects all his people to follow the example of the early churches in showing forth his death as often as they commemorate his resurrection. It is not easy to see, then, how the believer can neglect the dying command of his Lord without sinning against him.

Many are ready enough to admit that the primitive saints attended to the Lord's Supper every first day of the week; but they are prevented from following out

their convictions by certain difficulties that lie in their way. Not a few, for example, imagine that the frequent observance of the Supper has a tendency to destroy that solemnity of mind with which it becomes us to approach the table of the Lord. Now, it is readily admitted, that the weekly commemoration of the dying love of Jesus, *does* destroy that *superstitious* reverence with which the Lord's Supper is contemplated by multitudes. They appear to tremble at the very idea of taking the symbols of Christ's body and blood into their hands. This kind of mysterious awe and dread is certainly put to flight by frequent communion; but it would be strange indeed if the scriptural observance of the Supper should rob the soul of that holy solemnity with which it should be regarded. Who does not see that the objection is perfectly groundless? Are the other ordinances of divine appointment rendered less solemn by the frequency with which they are attended to? Are we less solemn, for instance, when we are approaching the footstool of mercy every day, or every hour of the day, than we should be, if we prayed only once a month or once a quarter? According to the principle of this objection, instead of the apostolical direction—"Pray without ceasing," the direction should be—"Pray very seldom: If you pray often, you will lose that seriousness and solemnity of soul with which you should approach the throne of grace. The seldomer you pray you will be the more solemn, and you will derive the more profit from the exercise." Every one sees the absurdity of this objection when it is applied to prayer, or to the reading of the Word of God, or to any other divine ordinance: Why then object to the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper on this ground? The breaking of bread every first day of the week has quite the opposite effect. When the soul is resting on the atoning work of Christ, and the mind is in a spiritual frame, the more frequently we aproach his table the more delight do we experience, and the greater solemnity do we feel. "Can any man conceive," asks an eloquent writer

already referred to, "why frequent prayer, meditation, &c., should promote the spiritual life, and frequent communion hinder it? Will increased faith produce unbelief; or renewed love indifference? Will melting views of divine grace harden the heart? or a commanding sense of the divine glory generate pride? Will fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, abate heavenly-mindedness? or the sealing of the Spirit of promise nurture carnal confidence? Oh—tell it not in Gath! Let not the rumour reach an uncircumcised ear; that believers in Jesus, who profess to love him supremely; proclaim his excellence to others; and declare, that the more they know and enjoy of him, the more they desire to know and enjoy;—that even believers in Jesus, when invited to frequent an ordinance, which he hath left as a seal of their covenant mercies; a means of intercourse with himself; a pledge of his eternal kingdom; should not only *refuse* but *justify* their refusal, by pleading that it would —DIMINISH THEIR REVERENCE!"*

It is readily admitted by many, that the primitive christians observed the Lord's Supper weekly, but they imagine that the followers of Christ in modern days, being placed in different circumstances, are not called on, in this particular, to follow their example. The reason generally assigned for this notion is the following:—It is supposed that the early believers, in consequence of the extraordinary sufferings to which they were exposed, and of the abundant measure of spiritual joy with which they were favoured, that they might sustain those sufferings, were in a state of continual fitness for taking into their hands the emblems of the body and blood of the Lord, but that we, being very differently situated, are not to be expected to be so constantly prepared as they were for partaking of the sacred Supper, and consequently that the weekly observance of the ordinance, which was proper for persons placed in their circumstances, is not required of us. It is at once granted, that between the

* Mason on Frequent Communion, p. 49.

sufferings and enjoyments of the early Christians and ours, there is a considerable difference; but it by no means follows from this, that we are at liberty to neglect the weekly celebration of the Supper. It must never be forgotten, as has already been remarked, that the example of the apostolical churches is as imperative as the most explicit precept, and that believers in every age are solemnly bound to observe the ordinances of the gospel as they observed them. But not to insist farther on this at present, is it not obvious, that the argument now under consideration would furnish as good a reason for praying less frequently, as for eating the Lord's Supper less frequently? "The first believers prayed always, for they were great sufferers and great receivers; but we, who neither suffer nor receive so much, may be satisfied, though we pray much less then they." The matter requires only to be presented in its true light, to see the utter fallacy of the argument. Besides, it must be borne in mind, that perhaps one reason of the abundant joy and rich consolation which the primitive believers were privileged to possess, may be found in their close adherence to the word and ordinances of God. "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. And they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." It surely cannot be right to plead our leanness, our want of spirituality of mind, as reasons for not following these early professors of the christian faith. We are not straitened in God, we are straitened in ourselves. The way to attain to that ardour in the divine life, that exalted spiritual enjoyment with which the primitive believers were favoured, is to wait upon God as they did. The ordinance of the Supper is designed, and admirably fitted, to strengthen the followers of Christ when in a low and languishing state, to revive and refresh their drooping spirits, to assist them onward in their heavenly way; is it not reasonable, then, that they should often partake of this sacred feast, that

their souls may be received and quickened by meditating on the wonders of redeeming love?

Many seem to be of opinion, that they cannot prepare themselves for coming to the Lord's table every first day of the week. What kind of preparation is required? It is neither more nor less than faith in the Lord Jesus Christ manifesting itself by a life of holiness. No one is in a fit state for partaking of the symbols of the body and blood of the Lord, until by believing the gospel, he has rested his hopes for eternity on his finished work. A believer in Christ should always be prepared for taking the memorials of his dying love into his hands. The ideas which obtain about the necessity of preparation for approaching the Lord's table appear to arise from the practice of observing certain days of fasting, of preparation, and of thanks-giving, in connection with the celebration of the ordinance; and it is conceived by many, that they are not in a fit state for partaking of the Lord's Supper if these days have been neglected. Now, it is sufficient to observe that not one word respecting such days is to be found in the Sacred Volume. Read the New Testament from the beginning of Matthew to the end of Revelation, and you will not find the shadow of an allusion to any thing of the kind. You will find fasting recommended in the New Testament, but no mention is made of fasting in connection with the dispensation of the Lord's Supper. The truth is, the days to which reference is made are *entirely of man's invention.* They were altogether unknown in Scotland for more than a hundred years after the Reformation. They were never heard of till the period of the persecution that took place under Charles the Second. The days of preparation, therefore, being entirely of man's instituting, it is manifestly wrong to render them a necessary appendage to the Lord's Supper. The genuine followers of Christ stand in need of no such preparatory services when they approach his table; and those who have not tasted that the Lord is gracious, have no right to take into their hands the memorials of his

love, however diligently they may have attempted to prepare themselves.

The Redeemer, therefore, expects all his disciples to shew forth his death every first day of the week; and the only preparation that he requires is a constant sense of his love upon their hearts constraining them to live not to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again. Reader! if you have not believed the truth concerning Jesus—if you have not been born again—you are solemnly enjoined, you are earnestly entreated, not to approach his table; for, in your present state, you are not fit to take the symbols of his broken body and shed blood into your hands. The ordinance of the supper is designed exclusively for the disciples of Christ—for converted souls; you have no right, therefore, to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. But if you have been renewed in the spirit of your mind, remember Jesus expects you to cast in your lot among his people—he expects you to show forth his death, and that every first day of the week. If you are living in the neglect of this ordinance, weigh the matter candidly and prayerfully, and follow out your conscientious convictions. We have seen that the primitive saints met together every Lord's day for the breaking of bread; and all who love the Saviour are solemnly bound to follow their example.

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# THE TABLE OF THE LORD;

## WHO SHOULD SIT DOWN AT IT?

THERE are few things connected with the institutions of Christianity on which the word of God is more explicit than on this; and there are few things that are more misunderstood. The consequence is, that unspeakable injury has been done to the cause of God and to the souls of men. The inquiry, therefore, for whom the Lord's Supper is intended, and who have a right to participate of the emblems of the Saviour's broken body and shed blood, is one of very great importance, and demands the serious and prayerful consideration of all his followers. Until scriptural views in regard to this momentous subject be adopted and universally diffused among the disciples of Christ, Christianity will not appear in its excellence, nor the Church in her strength and beauty.

A very little consideration will serve to convince any reflecting and candid mind, that the Redeemer never intended the ordinance of the Supper for any but his own people, and that none but those who have believed in his name, who have experienced a change of heart, and whose walk and conversation in the world are consistent with such a profession, should take their places at his table. In a word, *those, and those* ONLY, *who have been converted to God*, should commemorate the dying love of Jesus.

This is obvious from the very *design* of the Institution. The Lord's Supper is a commemorative rite, intended to keep believers in remembrance of the dying love of their Saviour, to promote the work of holiness in their hearts, and to exhibit to the world the union that subsists among them as his friends and followers. How can these objects be promoted by those who have not tasted that the Lord is gracious, or by a promiscuous assemblage of con-

verted and unconverted persons surrounding the Redeemer's table? How can those who are at enmity with Christ, meditate on the wonders of his redeeming mercy? How can they manifest the love and union that subsists among his people? The very objects, then, which the Lord's Supper is designed to promote, render it apparent that none but those who have been regenerated by the Spirit of God should partake of the symbols of the Redeemer's body and blood.

This, indeed, may be argued on the principles of reason and of common sense. Sinners who have not been renewed in the spirit of their mind, are represented in the word of God as the *enemies* of Christ. Now, is it not unreasonable to suppose that those who harbour enmity in their bosoms against him should be invited to his table? So long as men continue to hate the Redeemer they are manifestly unfit for partaking of the emblems of his dying love. This is so very obvious, that one would think it requires only to be pointed out, to convince every reflecting mind of the impropriety of unconverted people sitting down at the table of the Lord. The Saviour's foes have no right to be there—they can derive no advantage from being there. Their hearts must first be changed—they must become "new creatures in Christ Jesus;" then, and not till then, can benefit be derived from the sacred institution.

But the grand question is, What saith the Scripture? What is the testimony of the word of God in regard to this point? Does the Bible countenance the admission of ungodly persons to the Lord's table. If it does, they ought by all means to be admitted. But if it be manifest from the New Testament, that none but those who have believed on Christ and been renewed in the spirit of their minds, should take into their hands the memorials of his sufferings and death; to admit the unconverted to the ordinance, is obviously to act contrary to the declared will of the exalted Head of the church.

The question, Who have a right to sit down at the

Lord's table? plainly resolves itself into another, Who have a right to be members of a Christian church? For the Lord's Supper being a church ordinance—an ordinance that can be attended to by the people of God only in their united and social capacity, it is evident, that the answer to the latter of these two questions involves the answer to the former. We have only to ascertain, then, from the word of God, who should be members of a church, in order to ascertain who should take their places at the table of the Lord.

That none but the genuine followers of Christ should be admitted to the fellowship of a church, is obvious from the whole tenor of the New Testament. Our limits permit us to adduce only one or two passages in support of this position; but these may serve as a specimen of the whole. The believing reader is requested to consult the New Testament, particularly the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul, with a view to satisfy himself in regard to this important matter; and, if he lay aside his preconceived opinions, he will not fail to rise from the perusal, under the full conviction, that the Lord Jesus Christ intended none but converted people to appear before the world as his followers.

In the 3rd chapter of the 1st Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians from the 9th to the 17th verse,* it is plainly taught, that those only should be admitted to church fellowship who have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. The Apostle warns those to whom he wrote against building upon the foundation that had been laid, "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." By "gold, silver, precious stones," we are obviously to understand *genuine believers in Christ*; and by "wood, hay, stubble," are manifestly meant *unbelievers, unconverted people.* The two classes cannot possibly unite; a building constructed of such materials cannot be stable, it cannot stand the

* Our limits forbid us to quote at length, this and several other important passages of the Word of God referred to in the Tract. The reader is earnestly requested to peruse them carefully.

application of the fire that is to try it; the two classes ought not, therefore, to be connected. An attempt has sometimes been made to evade the force of this conclusion by representing the inspired writer as referring to *doctrinal sentiments* and not to character, and as warning the teachers of the Corinthian church against the mixing up of erroneous opinions with the pure truth of the gospel. But the merest glance at the passage will serve to convince any candid mind that it is to *persons* and not to doctrines that reference is made. The Apostle, addressing the members of the church at Corinth, says expressly, "*Ye* are God's building. Know *ye* not that *ye* are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple *ye* are." It is believers, then, and not doctrines that constitute the materials of which this glorious temple—the holy residence of the blessed Spirit—is built. This passage renders it clear as noon-day, that in the estimation of Paul, or, to speak more correctly, in the estimation of the Spirit of God, none should be admitted to the communion of a church, but those who give credible evidence of being born again.

This is plainly taught also by the same Apostle, in his 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, from the 14th verse to the end of the 6th chapter. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" &c. From these striking verses, it is obvious, that believers and unbelievers are not to be joined together in the fellowship of the gospel. The two are as incapable of amalgamating as light and darkness. Is it not manifest then, that the Apostle here teaches, that none but those who have been converted to God should be permitted to enter the communion of Christian churches? If this be not a fair inference from the passage, surely it is not possible to draw a conclusion legitimately from words.

But, in addition to the plain declarations of the New Testament on the subject, it is evident, that the primitive churches were composed exclusively of believers, that is, of persons who gave credible evidence of conversion to God. Look, for example, at the church in Jerusalem—the first of the primitive societies. Who constituted the membership of that church? The Evangelist informs us that it was composed of persons who had "gladly received the word of God;" and who "continued stedfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread, and in prayers." It is afterwards declared that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved;" and we may safely conclude that those whom *the Lord added* were believers indeed. Read the history of the formation of the early churches, as it is contained in the Acts of the Apostles, and you will find, that these societies were composed exclusively of persons who professed to have been brought under the power of saving truth. There was no such thing then as a promiscuous admission to the fellowship of churches. Conversion to God was insisted on as an indispensable term of communion. Those only who professed to have given themselves to the Lord, were permitted to cast in their lot among his people. That the churches referred to in the Acts of the Apostles were composed of persons who were Christians in the plain, unambiguous meaning of the word, will not be questioned by many. This is evident from the language employed by the evangelist in describing their spiritual state. Thus of the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, gathered from among the Jews, it is said, "Then had the churches rest and were edified; and walking in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost were multiplied." Acts ix. 31. Phraseology equally expressive of real conversion to the faith, is employed respecting those societies that were gathered from among the Gentiles. On hearing the gospel, "they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, and were

filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." Acts xiii. 48. And again, it is said, that when Paul and Barnabas visited the churches, "they confirmed the souls of the disciples, and exhorted them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts xiv. 22. Such language clearly proves, that those respecting whom it is employed, were persons who had experienced a change of heart, and who appeared before the world as the genuine followers of Jesus Christ.

That the churches planted by the Apostles were composed exclusively of persons who gave credible evidence of conversion to God, is rendered apparent by the manner in which several of them were addressed in the Epistles that were sent to them. The Epistle to the Romans is addressed to "all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." Rom. i. 7. The Corinthian church are described as persons who were "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." 1 Cor. i. 2. The Ephesians are styled "saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus." Eph. i. 1. From such phraseology, it is manifest that the Apostle regarded the churches to whom he wrote as societies of believers—of persons who had passed from death into life.

It thus appears, that the early churches were composed of individuals who professed to have been brought to the knowledge of the truth. But, it has been asked, Were there no *hypocrites* in these societies? No one can doubt that there were. But what conclusion is to be deduced from this? Are we to infer that a promiscuous admission to the fellowship of a church is scriptural and proper? No such thing. It must never be forgotten that in the primitive age, whenever a man discovered by his conduct that his heart was not right with God, he was excluded from the communion of the church to which he belonged. Look, for example, at the case of Simon Magus. The disciples ceased to regard him as a brother, whenever his true character was revealed. Hypocrites may

creep into churches; but no man is to be viewed as such until he discover himself. All we can insist on, is, a profession of conversion to God, and a life and conversation in the world consistent with that profession. When these qualifications are found in an individual we are bound to regard him as a follower of Christ. More than this no scripturally-constituted church is authorized to demand; less than this, it is not at liberty to take. There may be hypocrites in such a church; with that we have nothing to do.

Many are ready to ask, when their attention is turned to the important subject of purity of Christian fellowship, Was not the traitor Judas present with our Lord and his disciples on that memorable night when the ordinance of the Supper was instituted in the upper room at Jerusalem? The evidence is complete and satisfactory that Judas was present when Jesus ate *the passover* with his followers; but it is far from being obvious from the inspired narrative, that he was sitting at the table when the sacred Supper was celebrated. He seems to have left the apartment immediately after the celebration of the passover, to proceed on his murderous errand to the Chief Priests and Pharisees. But admit that Judas *was* present at the table when the heavenly Saviour placed the emblems of his body and blood into the hands of his disciples; what follows? that ungodly persons should be received into church communion? Most assuredly not. What was the character of Judas? He was not an openly wicked, immoral man. He seems to have enjoyed the confidence of his fellow-disciples, up to the hour in which he betrayed his Master. Judas was a *hypocrite*, perhaps a self-deceiver. The circumstance, then, of Judas being present when the Lord's Supper was instituted—if it was the case—proves that hypocrites may creep into the best regulated church, but it can never prove, that persons who give *no evidence of piety* should be admitted to the communion of Christian societies, and should be allowed to take their places at the table of the Lord.

It has been thought by some that the *parable of the tares* (Matt. xiii. 24—43) is not in harmony with the views advocated in these pages, but countenances the practice of promiscuous admission to the fellowship of churches. The design of this parable is very much misunderstood. When the servants of the householder came and told him that tares were growing among the wheat, and asked permission to go and gather them up, his reply was, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest." It has been inferred from this, that believers and unbelievers are to be admitted promiscuously to church communion. But no conclusion can be more unwarrantable. For where were the tares and the wheat to grow together?—in the church? So think those who deduce this conclusion from the parable. Our Lord's exposition of the parable settles this point. They are to grow together not in the church, but *in the world.* "The field," said Jesus, "is the world." It is in the world that believers and unbelievers—converted and unconverted sinners—are to live together in society, not in the church of Christ. Is it not strange that, with this explanation before their eyes, any should have inferred from the parable that our Lord intended persons of all characters to associate together in the fellowship of the gospel? The truth is, the parable has no reference to Christian communion at all; and those who view it in this light betray lamentable ignorance of its scope.

But it has been said, that to insist on conversion as an indispensable prerequisite for church fellowship, is to assume a prerogative to which men are not entitled—the prerogative of searching the heart. This by no means follows. All that churches have a right to demand from those who seek admission to their communion, is, a profession of love to Christ, and a walk and conversation in the world consistent with that profession. Candidates for Christian fellowship may be deceiving themselves, or attempting to deceive others—they may be hypocrites; but

no church on earth can legitimately refuse them admission, if they profess that they are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and if, so far as men can judge, there be credible evidence of a change of heart. This every church of Christ has a right to demand, and no church should be satisfied with less. But no attempt is made to search the heart, unless by the legitimate application of our Lord's most admirable rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The design of this Tract, it will be remembered, is to attempt to answer the question, Who should sit down at the table of the Lord? This question, we have seen, is included in another, Who should be admitted to the fellowship of a church? To this an answer is now in the reader's hands. It is as clearly taught in the New Testament, as anything connected with the nature and constitution of the Redeemer's kingdom is, that none but genuine believers should be admitted to the communion of Christian societies. The conclusion, therefore, inevitably follows, that none but the true followers of Christ —none but those who have experienced a change of heart —should take their places at the table of the Lord. And it is equally manifest, from the evidence that has been adduced from the New Testament, that those who do not insist on conversion to God as an indispensable pre-requisite for Christian fellowship, and who countenance a promiscuous admission of saints and sinners to the sacred ordinance of the Supper, cannot be viewed as, in this respect, followers of the churches that were planted by the Apostles of the Lord.

This may be in opposition to the sentiments which some who glance over these pages may have entertained on the subject of admission to the Lord's table. But let it never be forgotten that the question is not to be settled by the views which any man, or any class of men, may have held respecting it, but *by the Word of God*. In all matters of this kind, our appeal must be made "to the law and to the testimony." The grand question is, What saith the scripture? Ascertain what the New Tes-

tament teaches on the subject, and abide by its decision. This is the only authoritative standard, the only sure guide in all religious matters. If the believing reader is not yet satisfied as to the scripturalness of the conclusion to which we have come in regard to the admission of persons to the Lord's table, he is earnestly entreated carefully to read the New Testament for the purpose of ascertaining what the great Head of the church has revealed on the subject. This is a matter of paramount importance, and it must not be trifled with by any follower of the Saviour. The honor of Christ, the progress of his kingdom in the earth, and the eternal well-being of souls, are inseparably connected with it. Let believers remember, therefore, that if their exalted Lord teaches them to associate in the fellowship of the gospel with those only who give evidence of having experienced a change of heart, it is not left to their option what course they are to pursue. If none but converted persons are to approach the table of the Lord, it is very obvious that no consistent follower of Christ can countenance by his presence a promiscuous assemblage of communicants at that sacred feast.

Words are inadequate to express the fearful amount of injury that has resulted from a promiscuous admission of persons to the Lord's table. An imposing array of members is thereby secured to the churches; but oh! on account of this the name of Christ is blasphemed among the ungodly and the profane—the mouths of infidels are opened to jeer and to mock and to villify his cause—the church, instead of standing erect among the nations, arrayed in her beautiful garments, lies defiled in the dust—and immortal souls are ruined for ever. O ye who love the Saviour's name, do ye not tremble at consequences so tremendous? Imagine not that you are guiltless in the matter, if you countenance by your presence the admission of ungodly people to the sacred ordinance.

One most ruinous consequence of admitting people in an unconverted state to the Lord's table, is the tendency

it has to persuade them that they are Christians, and that all is well with them for eternity, while their hearts are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Immortal souls are thereby deluded to their everlasting ruin. When an ungodly person obtains a token of admission to the Lord's Supper, he is virtually acknowledged by minister and people as a follower of Christ. *The most faithful preaching can do very little good to a person in these circumstances.* When sinners are warned of their danger, and urged to flee to Christ for salvation; when the fearful consequences of dying in an unconverted state are faithfully pointed out; *the unconverted communicant* never dreams that such warnings are meant *to apply to him.* When impressions of the importance of attending to the concerns of the soul and eternity are made upon his mind, they are soon effaced by the thought that he has already been acknowledged as a believer in Christ, and has been permitted to sit down at his table along with his friends. O! who can calculate *the amount of injury* that has in this way been *done to the souls* of men? Multitudes have pleased themselves with a profession of Christianity; with hearts unrenewed have they been admitted to the table of the Lord: and they have gone down to the grave with a lie in their right hand. O! *how tremendous is the load of responsibility that rests on Christian ministers and Christian people on this account!*

Remember, dear reader, that, if you are not converted to God—if you have not believed in Christ—if you are not a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus—you have no right to approach his table. The Lord's Supper will do you no good unless you are born again: it is not designed as a converting ordinance at all. It is intended for the friends of the Redeemer, and not for his foes.—People often speak about admission to church *privileges*, and particularly about the privilege of sitting down at the table of the Lord. This is indeed an exalted privilege *to a child of God*, the highest which he is permitted to enjoy on earth; but ah! it is no privilege to an *un-*

*converted person.* Every time he partakes of the symbols of the Saviour's broken body and shed blood, he is mocking God, he is insulting the Redeemer, he is injuring his immortal soul; he is "eating and drinking judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Unconverted reader, dream not of deriving benefit from this blessed ordinance, so long as you continue in your present state. Love to God is a stranger to your bosom, your carnal mind is enmity against him; first be reconciled to God by believing the glorious testimony concerning his Son, and then you will be welcome to approach the Redeemer's table. While you continue to live at a distance from Christ, your sins are unpardoned, the curse of the violated law rests upon your head, and you are every moment in imminent danger of perishing for ever in the realms of wo; in this melancholy state, what good can it do you to take into your hands the symbols of the body and blood of the Lord?

It is a solemn thought, that without conversion to God there can be no admission to heaven. Why then seek admission to the Lord's table while you are unpardoned and unrenewed? Remember the striking words of our Lord, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 3. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16. It is high time this all-important matter were settled; for you have not a moment to lose. O flee to Christ without delay, and he will save you with an everlasting salvation. Let it never be forgotten that a form of godliness will avail you nothing on the great day of account; and that unless you are renewed in the spirit of your mind, your admission to the ordinances of the gospel will only aggravate your doom in the pit of woe.

ON

# THE NATURE

OF

# Christian Fellowship.

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One of the first effects of the belief of the gospel in primitive times was, the separation of believers from the world, and their association together in visible church-fellowship. No sooner do we hear of men believing and turning to the Lord, than we hear that all that believed were together. Nor do we find, in all the New Testament, a single instance of one professing to believe the gospel and not seeking to join the disciples. The association of believers as visible societies, obeying the laws and observing the ordinances of their exalted Lord, not only answered the end of their own edification, but also exhibited a constant testimony against the absurdity—the impurity—the impiety of the popular worship, as a corruption of ordinances originally divine. The Temples, Priests, and Sacrifices of idolatrous worship, were doubtless derived originally from the divine model of patriarchal or levitical worship. And who does not know, that corruption of christian ordinances, as inconsistent with the inspired model of the new economy, as idolatry was with that of the old, has taken place under the christian profession?

Some of the brethren in the church in Corinth, it appears, wishing to avoid the charge of bigotry, and to

make their court to the priests, and other leaders in the national worship, joined occasionally with their neighbours in their idolatrous festivals! This temporizing conduct they attempted to vindicate by saying, that they knew "That an idol was nothing in the world, and that there was no other God but one," 1 Cor. viii. 4–11. Hence when they sat down to feast with their neighbours in the Idol's Temple, they neither joined with them in religious veneration of the Idol, nor did they eat of the sacrifices otherwise than a common meal. This however was but a lame vindication, when confronted with the uniform abhorrence in which God held every species of idolatry, and the earnestness with which he warned his people not to give it in any shape their countenance. What was the language of their conduct when they joined, though but in appearance, with idolaters in religious worship? Was it not that they had fellowship with them in presenting their devotions to the Idol, and in receiving blessings in return? Was it not that they saw little difference between the true God and a dumb idol, as objects of adoration—between idolatrous festivals and christian institutions—between an idolatrous assembly feasting and revelling, and a christian church observing divine ordinances? In short, did they not say by their conduct that men gained little by becoming christians, and lost as little by continuing idolaters? For the truth of these positions, Paul appeals to the acknowledged sentiments of Christians, of Jews, and of Heathens, on the subject of religious fellowship, 1 Cor. x. 16–23.

Beginning with the Christian sentiment on this subject, he says, "*The cup of blessing which we bless,*" &c.

The Apostle here refers to the fellowship of a christian church in the Lord's Supper. The Cup, in symbolical language, signifies that portion of good or evil which God in his providence deals out to men in this world, Ps. xxiii.

5, John xviii. 11. The Cup, in the Lord's Supper, is the symbol not of evil, but of good. It is "the cup of blessing"—an emblem of all the blessings of Salvation from sin and from wrath, by the shedding of that precious blood which it represents. This blood was shed to ratify or confirm the covenant of Salvation. in which God engages to be the God of his people, to write his law in their hearts, and to remember their sins no more. But the blood of Christ, not only, like the typical blood of the former economy, confirms and ratifies God's promises to his people, (see Exodus xxiv. 8,) but is itself the immediate procurer of all these blessings, see Matth. xxvi. 28, Eph. i. 7, Heb. ix. 11–16. With how much propriety, then, is the emblematic cup called the cup of blessing, as the memorial of that blood by which all the blessings that we have in possession or prospect, were procured for us and confirmed to us.

"*Which we bless.*"—To bless, in scripture language, when man is the agent, signifies, to pray for God's blessing on, or to give him thanks on behalf of, the subjects referred to. From a comparison of all the passages in which the subject is mentioned it plainly appears that, at the original institution of the Supper, Christ simply gave thanks, Matth. xxvi. 26, 27, Mark xiv. 22, 23, Luke xxii. 19, 1 Cor. xi. 23–25. In comparing these passages let the reader observe, that where Matthew and Mark say Christ blessed, Luke says he gave thanks, which shews that both words in that connection mean the same thing, and that Paul, who received an account of it by revelation, and delivered that account to the Corinthians to correct the abuses of which they had been guilty, says Christ gave thanks. To bless, therefore, in the passage before us, as it refers to the same subject, must have the same meaning. Simple scriptural views of this subject are of high importance, to the right understanding of the

nature and design of this sacred institution. Not only have the Transubstantiation of the Pope, and the more mysterious, if less absurd, Consubstantiation of Luther taken their rise from the idea that the bread and wine, and not God, are the objects of the blessing here referred to, but even with many among ourselves, the idea still prevails, that the consecration prayer (as it is often called) communicates a mysterious, undefinable something to them, which makes them more sacred than before.

The language of the prayers, and of the addresses from the head of the table, not unfrequently tends to cherish these unscriptural ideas. When the prayer proceeds on the idea of a consecration, and in connection with this, the communicants are told that Jesus Christ is *now* set forth, crucified before their eyes—that they are now seeing and tasting and handling the word of life,* it must tend to cherish superstitious veneration for the elements to such a degree, as to mar their peace and joy, and to turn away their attention from the truth they are commemorating, to what they have among their hands. Whereas, when the blessing referred to is viewed as a solemn thanksgiving to God for the gift of his Son, we are led to consider the elements remaining precisely what they were before—bread and wine, and, simply as such, to be used as memorials of the death of Christ in the room of his people. This will appear still more evident when we consider, that the apostle does not refer exclusively to the presiding individual when he says, "*we bless*," but to the

* My principal objection to the use of these passages in this connection is, that in their application to the elements in the Lord's Supper, they must be *accommodated*, and turned away from their original design, a practice which, however common, has, I am persuaded, done no little injury to Christianity. Besides, although some Christians of maturer judgments may be able to understand and apply them aright, yet others, and perhaps the greater number, will always be liable to misunderstand and therefore to misapply them in this connection.

whole body of the Church presenting their united thanks to the Father of mercies for his unspeakable gift. Whatever virtue is attributed to what is called the consecration prayer, in communicating something sacred to the elements, is, from the highest to the lowest view of it, ascribed to the Minister, and not to the church; but here, the blessing is the joint action of the whole body. This gives a very different view of the nature and design of the Lord's Supper, from the idea of the elements being constituted holy by the consecration of a Minister, and so becoming objects of religious veneration.

"*Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?*"—The word communion or fellowship, for they both mean the same thing, signifies the joint action of a select number of individuals, in giving, receiving, or enjoying, that in which they have fellowship. Partaking of the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, being the joint action of the whole church, they all had fellowship together in that action. This was admitted; hence it followed by parity of reason, that, when Christians went into the Idol's Temple, and became partakers with idolaters, of the cup and of the table of Devils, (see 1 Cor. viii. 10,) they had visible fellowship with them in that social action! This could not be denied, without denying what Paul assumes as taken for granted; that in the Lord's Supper all the communicants had fellowship together.

One of the grand expedients by which not a few attempt to quiet their consciences, and to vindicate their conduct in eating the Lord's Supper with visible unbelievers, is to maintain that they have nothing to do with fellow-partakers—that they have to do with God *only*, it being a transaction *entirely* between God and the soul!! This sentiment is found so very convenient, that even public teachers have employed it to quiet the minds of Christ's disciples, when they begin to question the lawfulness of

being yoked together in fellowship with unbelievers! The parable of the tares among the wheat, Matth. xiii. 24–31, compare vs. 36–44, has been also wrested, and pressed into this service. It has been employed to teach the disciples of Christ, that it is the will of their Lord that the holy and profane should be united together in religious society, till he come at last to separate them.* But if, in eating the Lord's Supper, Christians have nothing to do with fellow worshippers, why were the Corinthians reproved and punished for eating it *in parties*? —why were they commanded to tarry one for another?—why should we not, like the Episcopal and Roman Churches, administer it in public to each individual separately, and in private to the sick and the dying?—why should not the Christian edify himself by eating it in his closet? To these questions no answer can be given, consistent with the common practice in Scotland, except, that it is an institution entirely social—a fellowship, that it is not intended for individuals, as such, but for associated bodies. But did the Lord intend that the holy and the profane—his friends and his enemies, should hold fellowship together in this feast of love? Certainly not! The Christian's mind revolts from the idea! What disciple would not shrink with horror from the thought of *holding fellowship* with the open enemies of his Lord in

* Any one who will take the Redeemer's explanation of his own language will see, that this parable was not intended to prohibit the separation of believers from the world in church fellowship. The field is the world as such, and not the church as distinct from the world. The prohibition refers to the well-known practice of rooting heretics out of the world, in place of simply putting them away from the church. In this view of the subject, the history of the church shews the vast importance of the prohibition. I would ask the reader if he thinks it possible, that Paul, when he says, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," meant to overturn the precept of his Lord, when he says, "Let both grow together until harvest."

the sacred institution of the Supper! Yet the distinction between joining with the ungodly at the table of the Lord, and having fellowship with them, is of their own, not of God's making! If there be any meaning in the passage under review,—if there be any conclusiveness in the Apostle's reasoning, we hold fellowship with those with whom we eat the Lord's Supper, with those with whom we are associated in church fellowship. It may be thought, however, a matter of complete indifference, to have fellowship, even with unbelievers, in eating a little bread and tasting a little wine. And no doubt, apart from the nature and design of the fellowship, it is so. But it is not fellowship in a common meal. It is the fellowship of the body and blood of the Lord. It is by Christ's appointment, a visible symbolical representation, and on the part of communicants, a public declaration of their fellowship together in all the blessings of Redemption by his death. Hence it followed, that when any of of the Christians in Corinth went to feast with idolaters in the Idol's Temple, they by their conduct declared, that they had fellowship with them in the participation of those blessings, supposed to be derived from the Idol, through the medium of the sacrifices on which they feasted? On the very same principle, when Christians join in religious fellowship with unbelievers, they by their conduct declare, that they esteem them as fellow-partakers with them in all the blessings of pardon, sanctification, and eternal life! And while this is the language of the Christian's conduct, it is in vain that he attempts, by any other means, to persuade them that it is not in his opinion. It is easy to see what a snare this may become to deluded souls, and what a widely extended mischief must result from its general adoption in what are called Christian countries. Unrenewed men love and cherish the deception which helps to keep their consciences easy while living

in sin—which says, peace, peace, while there is no peace; and surely of all means of deception, access to what are called church privileges,—fellowship with Christians in church connection, is the most extensively successful and efficacious! It may safely be asserted, indeed, that if profaneness and infidelity have slain their thousands, this snare of the Christian's making has slain its ten thousands. I would therefore entreat the Christian reader to inquire seriously, whether he be not found contributing to harden and ruin the souls of his fellow-sinners, by holding religious fellowship with them in this sacred institution, while he knows them to be living without God, and without hope in the world. Is it not deceitful—is it not cruel in the extreme, to contribute, to foster in their minds an opinion which you know is false, which you know will prove ruinous to their souls? You will perhaps be disposed to reply, "we are not authorised to judge the heart." So say I. But *we are required* to judge the life, and from the life to infer the state of the heart. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

When I see a man forming his conduct by the precepts of the gospel, I am bound to recognise him as a child of God; but when I see one treating these with indifference, I am warranted to conclude that, "there is no fear of God before his eyes;" for "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." This objection, then, only indicates indisposition to obey this part of the will of Christ.

But the word fellowship signifies, not only a joint, but also a mutual action; consisting in giving and receiving, Phil. iv. 15. This is evidently implied here, and is necessary to support the apostle's reasoning. When any of the Christians in Corinth went into the idol's temple, they not only had fellowship with idolaters, but also with the objects of idolatrous worship, in professedly receiving from them those blessings which they were supposed to

confer on their worshippers. Hence, says Paul, "the Gentiles sacrifice to devils and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils:" intimating that the worshippers were supposed to have fellowship with their gods, (whom he here calls devils or demons), through the medium of the worship which they presented. To shew them that this was the language of their conduct when they joined with idolaters, the apostle reminds them of the acknowledged principles of Christians in regard to the Lord's Supper:—that they had fellowship, not only with each other, but also with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Here God the Father is brought to their remembrance as having given them "the bread of heaven;" the Son as having "given himself for them:" while they receive with joy, and remember with gratitude, the inestimable favour,—the gift of sovereign, free, eternal love. In this ordinance, then, God is represented as freely bestowing, and communicants as gratefully receiving, blessings of inestimable value,—of essential importance. Hence is it a lively, a striking representation, that "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," as well as with one another, in the enjoyment of the common salvation. How unseemly, then—what an insult to Divine Majesty—what an obscuring of its meaning—what a perversion of its design—what a marring of its beauty, to see Christ's disciples sitting together at the table of the Lord with the unholy and profane, with the drunkard, the swearer, the unclean, with the mere man of the world, or at best the mere moralist—with those who have no faith in Jesus, no love to his people, no regard to his authority—joining with them in an institution designed to exhibit to the world the fellowship of the disciples of Jesus in the common salvation: and their fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ in giving and receiving that salvation!

"*The bread which we break, is it not the communion, (or fellowship), of the body of Christ.*"—As in the whole of this passage, the apostle in speaking of the joint action of the church in observing the Lord's Supper, the breaking here spoken of refers, not to the action of the President before distributing the bread, but to that of the church in eating it. Accordingly, to break bread is to eat the Lord's Supper, Acts ii. 42. and xx. 7. Fellowship in the body and in the blood of the Lord seems to be essentially the same; yet both in John vi. and at the institution of the Supper, Christ maintains a distinction between them. Perhaps the breaking of his body may signify his sufferings in general, and the shedding of his blood, the issue of these sufferings in death, with its effect in procuring pardon for the people; for "without shedding of blood there was no remission." Neither death unaccompanied with suffering, (see Heb. ii. 10.) nor suffering that did not terminate in death, would have delivered the guilty from the curse of the law. They must have been both united in procuring salvation. Hence, as meat and drink are the essential ingredients in the sustenance of man, so Christ says, "my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;" intimating that he possesses in himself every thing necessary to a complete salvation.

"*For we, being many, are one bread and one body, &c.*"—The translation of this verse is unintelligible. Christians are often represented as one body, but never as one bread. The apostle's meaning evidently is, (and it will bear to be so rendered,) "Because the bread, (or loaf,) is one, we the many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread, or loaf." The apostle's design in this verse is to show, that the very external form of the Lord's Supper is intended by Christ, to exhibit the unity of the church as one body, serving one Lord, obeying

one code of laws, enjoying common privileges, holding similar sentiments, entertaining similar hopes, and pursuing similar conduct. In short, that as the one broken loaf represents the one suffering Saviour, so the joint participation of the whole body of communicants in that one loaf, represents their fellowship together in the common salvation. Nor is it possible for all the ingenuity and sophistry of man, to force any other consistent meaning on the passage, nor indeed on any account we have in Scripture of the nature and design of this important institution.

Will the Christian then affirm, that it is not a social institution—a fellowship—that he has nothing to do with fellow communicants? However apparently solemn and devout its observation, if the worshippers acknowledge not union and fellowship together as one associated body, *it is not the Lord's Supper*, but a mere caricature—a delusive imitation! The apostle's argument requires that, even in the idolatrous festivals of the heathen, there was a visible union, and acknowledged fellowship among the worshippers, and much more surely in the social institution of the Lord's Supper. But where is the exhibition of the one body of Christ in those societies, where the great mass of communicants, are indisputably living without God in the world, and the few Christians among them, driven to the miserable shift of asserting that they have nothing to do with fellow worshippers, in an institution manifestly social! In what a pitiable plight is the Christian placed, when driven to the alternative of either perverting the nature and design of the ordinance, by observing it as a solitary individual, or of holding religious fellowship with the open enemies of his Lord. Where is the exhibition of the unity of the body of Jesus in the Lord's Supper, when some of the communicants are at the table, others of them looking on, others walking the

streets or the fields, and others perhaps refreshing themselves, either at home, or in the houses of friends whom they visit, or in public-houses! Is this a visible exhibition of fellowship in the Lord's Supper? Is this what the Apostle means when he says, "*we the many are one body*" —"when ye come together to eat *tarry one for another?*" I would beseech the Christian reader, to compare these practices with the Bible account of the nature and design of the Lord's Supper, and see how far they agree. Is it likely in the nature of things that Christ meant to address his enemies, or even his friends and his enemies promiscuously, when he says, "This do in remembrance of me?" You dare not say so. *You know* that he meant to address his friends and *his friends only*. You know that his friends, and only his friends, *can remember his death:* You know that his friends, and only his friends, *feel any interest in his death.* On what principle, then, or by what authority, do you join with his enemies, in, I will not say the observance, but the prostitution of this sacred ordinance? Can you say that you have the authority of Christ for your conduct? No: if you take the Bible for your guide, you cannot. Are you not contributing to ensnare the souls of deluded sinners by the countenance you give them? *Are you not eating and drinking unworthily* when you contribute to prostitute and profane the emblems of the body and blood of the Lord? Did you ever pay any attention to the inspired precepts? "Be not unequally yoked together (in fellowship) with unbelievers."* "Come out from among them and be separate:" "Be not partaker of other men's sins." These precepts are as binding

* This passage, (2 Cor. vi. 14—18,) refers principally to church fellowship, though marriage and other dangerous connexions may be included. It is of the church as such that Paul says, Ye are the temple of the living God, and it is in that God promises to walk, see Levit xxvi. 12. Math. xviii. 20.

on Christ's disciples as any in the Bible. He that said, "Do this in remembrance of me," said also, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs."

I am aware that many will be disposed to dismiss the whole subject with this summary reply,—"Evils and improprieties occur in those societies that profess separation from the world, as well as in those that make no such profession." It is admitted. Evils took place in the apostolic churches, and evils will take place in every society, while the human heart remains what it is. But is there no difference between those evils that result from the remaining ignorance and wickedness of the subjects of grace, and those that are radical and essential in the very constitution of religious societies? Is there no difference between those evils that occasionally accompany the execution of the laws of Christ, and those that arise from the total neglect of discipline, or rather the impossibility of bringing the laws of Christ to bear on the professing multitudes who pay no regard to them, who scarcely acknowledge their authority? The one class of evils is inseparable from the present state of humanity, the other from the vain attempt to constitute a worldly society a Christian church. Improper characters under a hypocritical profession, obtained a place in the apostolic churches; but as soon as they discovered themselves they were put away. The same thing will happen still. But while the churches require of those they admit a credible profession, look diligently lest any among them fail of the grace of God, and put away hypocrites and self-deceivers when they discover themselves; this is all they can do, all that is required. God's own people occasionally fall into sin, and so bring leanness into their souls, grief on their brethren, and reproach on their profession; but the application of discipline, by the blessing of God, brings them to repentance, and restores them to the confidence and fel-

lowship of their brethren. But this is very different from the common practice of receiving all, or almost all, who choose to apply, and of retaining all who choose to continue, with little or no regard to character or conduct. Let the disciples of Christ, then, remember their obligation to turn away from every society in which his institutions are prostituted and profaned by the indiscriminate admission of all sorts of characters to partake of them; and to associate with fellow disciples in the fellowship of the gospel, to whatever inconvenience it may expose them. Thus only can they serve God acceptably. *Thus only can they enjoy the pleasure and the profit of Christian fellowship.*

Let the churches of Christ remember, that while they approve the sentiments and observe the practice here recommended, it becomes them to look to themselves. "God desireth truth in the inward parts." He will have his worshippers "to worship him in spirit and in truth." But it is very possible to observe all the ordinances of the Gospel, regularly and scripturally, and yet be destitute of this truth. The first question therefore with every professing Christian should be, not with what denomination am I in fellowship, what system of ordinances do I observe, but what is my state before God? Have I as a guilty sinner, without help or hope from any other quarter, come to God through Jesus Christ, for pardoning mercy, and justifying grace: and has my belief in God's pardoning mercy, led me to devote myself unreservedly to him, to live and die to his glory? It is in this state alone, that a sinner can observe church ordinances with acceptance before God, or with advantage to himself.

Again, "let us not be high-minded but fear." When we compare our own order and system of ordinances with those of others around us, we are not without danger of being lifted up with pride by the contrast. Self-righteous-

ness has many an avenue to the depraved heart, and our church order is very liable to become one of them.

Lastly, brethren, "let us love one another." Our sentiments and practice require this: and failing in this, we act infinitely more inconsistently than those whose practice we condemn. Appearing every Lord's day around our Father's board, feasting on the riches of his love, professing to be but one body, members one of another, can we but esteem, can we but love one another? Let us see, however, that we "love not in word and in tongue, but indeed and in truth;" for "hereby shall we assure our hearts before God." But "if our heart condemn us of want of love to the brethren, we cannot enjoy scriptural confidence toward God." Our observance of scriptural ordinances is not the end, it is only a means to the end. It is intended to carry forward our purity, our spirituality, our love to God and to our brethren; and in proportion as our system of ordinances is more simple and scriptural than that of others, in proportion ought we to strive to excel them in these its native—its intended effects. "Finally brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

To conclude, the death of Christ, which his disciples are bound to commemorate in their social meetings, is proclaimed to all men for the obedience of faith. Christ died to save the guilty from the wrath of God; and whosoever believeth in him shall never perish; for his blood cleanseth from all sin. But perhaps my reader is one of the numerous class, who by taking the Sacrament once or twice in the year, by a punctual observance of fast and other preaching days, and by a few prayers presented on these occasions, hopes to please God, and to escape the wrath to come! Remember, my fellow-sinner, who has said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the

kingdom of God." The Lord's Supper is designed only for the children of God—for the disciples of Christ. To them only it is of any use. The disciples of Christ are one spirit with him, walk as he also walked—love and obey him—are not conformed to this world, in its maxims and practices; but take his word as the guide of all their conduct. Is this the case with you? Do you love the Saviour? Do you wish in all things to know and do his will? If not, you have neither part nor lot in God's Salvation; and your observance of fasts and Sacraments, instead of procuring for you the favor of God, is heaping up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God! There is only one Saviour, even Jesus. He that cometh to him will not be rejected. If you believe in him you shall be made free—free from guilt and condemnation, you shall become the subject of sanctifying grace—you shall be fitted and enabled to observe all the ordinances of the gospel with acceptance—you shall enjoy all the privileges of a child of God. In short, you shall be blessed in life, safe in death, and happy in eternity. But if you believe not in him, you perish for ever; and your mock observance of Sacraments and fasts, will only augment your guilt, and add to your final misery. Hear then the voice of divine mercy sounding in the gospel—"As I live saith the Lord I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should return from his ways and live,—turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die saith the Lord God."

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ON

# THE WEEKLY OBSERVANCE

OF THE

# LORD'S SUPPER.

[The following Essay on the propriety and scriptural authority of weekly Communion, is part of a tract addressed, many years ago, by Dr. WARDLAW of Glasgow to his own church and congregation on several subjects. The tract was written and printed only for private circulation, and this part of it was published by the author's permission—being deemed from its simplicity and clearness to be much fitted to convince the humble inquirer, and remove the difficulties of the humble objector. Those acquainted with the author's writings will recognize at once, in the following unpretending pages, his usual candour and discrimination, and regard the succinctness and paucity of illustration which suited their original design as equally suited to their present form.

It is pleasing to perceive the rapid progress which Christians of different denominations are making towards apostolic practice. The open avowal which several ministers in the Established Church of Scotland and Secession Churches have made in favour of weekly communion, excites the hope that this part of primitive worship will, ere long, obtain the place from which it should never have been removed. And the publisher

of this tract would only add his prayer that neither prejudice, nor fancied expediency, nor any other obstacle may any longer prevent those who believe in its sentiments from practising them, and walking scripturally in all the ordinances of God's house.]

**The following considerations regarding the Lord's Supper deserve serious attention:**

1. From the nature of the ordinance, as commemorative of that dearest of themes to the believer's heart, the love of his dying Lord, it might be expected that all the wishes and desires of his soul should be in favour of frequency; that there should be a predisposition to regard it as a privilege to himself, and a duty of affection and gratitude to Him, and consequently to ask, How often can I be allowed the enjoyment of it?

2. The Lord's day is sacred to the memory and celebration of the *resurrection* of Christ. Now, if, in the wisdom of God, a weekly commemoration has not been deemed too frequent for his resurrection, can it be too frequent for his *death*? The two are inseparable. Neither has any interest to us without the other—the death apart from the resurrection, nor the resurrection apart from the death; the death being the atonement for sin, and the resurrection the evidence of its acceptance. Can any thing be more reasonable, then, than to unite the commemoration of the two? or any thing more previously probable, than that He who instituted the weekly celebration of his resurrection should associate it with the celebration of his death? We cannot separate them in thought; why should they be separated in commemoration?

3. If there were nothing at all determinate in the Scriptures respecting the frequency with which this ordinance should be observed, it must stand in a very peculiar predicament. The supposition comes as near as possible to a setting aside of the obligation to observe it altogether;

fer, in that case, there is no possibility of saying *when* any individual or any church is guilty of the neglect of it. The Independents of the south (England) employ the same arguments against *weekly* communion in favour of *once a month*, as are used by the Presbyterians of the north (Scotland) for once in the *half year*, or in the *year*; and he who should take a fancy to *two* years or to *ten* years might do the same. He who should observe it once in twelve years would go no further beyond the *annual* celebrator, than the annual celebrator goes beyond the *monthly*; and it becomes impossible to fix upon any professing Christian the charge of disobeying authority, except in the one case of his not observing it *at all*. Can this be?

4. I would found little or nothing on the words "*as often as*;" because, though they do intimate the idea of repetition, and of frequent repetition, yet they are not at all determinate; and the object of Him who used them was not at the time to inculcate frequency, but to enjoin that *whensoever* the observance was attended to, it should be done *in a certain manner*, and *for a certain end*.

5. In Acts ii. 42, it is said, respecting the church at Jerusalem, immediately after its formation, "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in *breaking of bread*, and in prayers." Now, assuming, what none of you will question, that the "breaking of bread" means the Lord's Supper, the passage clearly suggests—1*st*, The general idea of *frequency*—for how otherwise could the *steadfastness* of the church in the observance of the ordinance have been immediately ascertained? Had it been celebrated, for example, once in six months, it must have been *some years* before steadfastness could have appeared:—2*dly*. Its being a part of the *regular stated services of the church*, when they came together, by Divine authority, for the purposes of social worship; for it stands as one in an enumeration of these, and not at all as a rare or extraordinary thing.

6. This is corroborated by Acts xx. 7. Look at it. Does it not convey the idea that "breaking bread" was one of the stated purposes of their coming together on the first day of the week? I think the "*when*" refers to the particular *time of the day* when they assembled for that special purpose. But, whatever be in this—had it been simply said "when the disciples *came together*," no one would ever have questioned the inference that coming together was their usual practice on that day. The other inference is equally valid.

7. Look, too, at 1 Cor. xi. 17–21. This is a very decisive passage as to the *matter of fact*.—1*st*. There must have been *frequency*, else there could not have been such early corruption. 2*dly*. The degree of this frequency is clear. They *came together* every Lord's day. But they came together "for the worse;" and the reason of this was the corruption in the observance of this ordinance, arising from their unhappy divisions. They must, therefore, have been accustomed to observe it; and it is not with the *frequency* but with the *corruption* that the fault is found. No case of example can be clearer; and should it be alleged that it proves *too much*; because they "came together" on *other* days, as well as on the Lord's day, our answer is, though we can only state without illustrating it, that their other meetings were *voluntary*, whereas their meetings on the Lord's day were by *Divine authority*; and the authority which enjoined the day, enjoined also its observances. These simple scriptural arguments might be confirmed by an appeal to the universal voice of antiquity, so far as it can be distinctly ascertained, in the times immediately following those of the apostles. Into this detail, however, it is quite needless to enter.

I trust what has been said may confirm conviction of Divine authority and primitive example, as to the weekly celebration of the ordinance of the Supper. And if that authority be admitted, then there must in all cases of

irregular attendance, be either a want of *right conception* or of *adequate impression*, of the duty. Now surely, with regard to the *object* of the ordinance, nothing can be more *simple*, and nothing more *important*. It is the commemoration of the atoning death of our common Lord, and the social remembrance of his love. Its *simplicity* is in beautiful harmony with the simplicity of the gospel testimony in which that love is revealed. The gracious Saviour invites to this simple feast of love, every simple-hearted believer in his name—every one who has learned by the teaching of his Spirit, the first elementary lesson of his gospel—the lesson of sincere, humble, exclusive reliance—the reliance of a guilty, lost, and helpless sinner—on his atoning blood and perfect righteousness, as the only foundation of hope. There is, indeed, a fence around the table; but it is not a fence of briars and thorns to any contrite and humble-minded friend of the Master of the feast. Its *importance* is equal to its simplicity. He by whom it was instituted knew well, how entirely the spiritual peace and joy of his people, the purity and vigour of the principles of the Divine life in their souls, and, consequently, the consistent practical godliness of their lives, depend on the constancy of their believing remembrance of himself. He knew, too, how eminently this was fitted to knit their hearts to one another in love. For these ends he appointed it; and if we *value* these ends, we must not neglect it.

Brethren, our attendance on the instituted ordinances of the Lord must not be allowed to depend on any thing so necessarily variable and fluctuating as the frames and feelings of our minds. This will never do. How would it answer to apply such a principle to the regular morning and evening exercise of personal or domestic devotion; and to neglect these, whenever we felt our minds not quite in the frame we might desire? If you complain of *coldness* and *deadness*, is the proper remedy for these the neglect of the very *means* that are appointed for *spiritual*

*excitement?* Is it not strange, when you mourn the lack of spirituality, to shun an ordinance, of which the leading design is to promote the very thing of which the deficiency is lamented? When any want of spirituality discovered itself in any of the apostolic churches, do you ever find the apostles making it a part of their counsel, that this or any other ordinance should be relinquished, or be seldomer observed? No. This was not their way, neither should it be ours. I need not surely, in addressing *you*, answer at large the common objection, that *frequency diminishes solemnity.* The following hints may suffice:—

1. There is no necessity for our denying entirely the principle of the objection, although it might be fairly and strongly questioned. The simple inquiry should be, what is the will of the Lord? Ascertain this, and our ground is clear. Let us attend to the duty, and watch and pray against the danger.

2. The objection involves an impeachment of the wisdom of God. He has not considered as too frequent a weekly commemoration of the *resurrection* of Christ; why, then, should we regard as too frequent the weekly remembrance of his death? If he has not thought of attaining solemnity by infrequency in the one case, why should we in the other? Are we wiser than God?

3. The objection applies to every thing else that is sacred. "Pray without ceasing," is the Divine prescription; but the spirit of this objection would lead us to increase the solemnity of prayer by attending to it seldom, and surrounding the infrequent act of devotion with self-devised accompaniments.

4. If it does not accord with experience that reverence is diminished by frequency in regard to *other* acts of spiritual service, and if as to them no such plea for infrequency is ever thought of, why should this ordinance be the sole exception? Why should it be imagined, for how can it be the case, that frequent prayer, meditation,

and other sacred exercises, should *promote* the spiritual life, and frequent communion should *hinder* it? Frequent remembrance of Christ make us revere and love him less! Tell it not in Gath! What would the world think of such a sentiment?

5. Granting that, from its nature, there is a peculiar solemnity in the ordinance, does not the length to which this argument is often carried savour much more of the spirit of bondage and fear, than of the spirit of freedom, and humble confidence, and gracious filial affection which the knowledge and faith of the gospel are fitted and mercifully intended to inspire?

6. Is not that a *spurious* and *false* solemnity, which arises not from the nature of the ordinance, but from extraneous human additions to it?—which displaces it from the situation which it held amongst the regular observances of primitive worship? which, while it elevates one ordinance to an almost superstitious pre-eminence, proportionally depresses others? which divests it of that true scriptural solemnity, which lies in its sublime simplicity? which, instead of checking the presumption of the thoughtless and the worldly, serves only to agitate with needless fears the spirit of the timid self-diffident believer?

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"In imitation of the Apostles, the pastors of the ancient church did keep up the practice of celebrating the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, through the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries. To evidence this, if it were called in question, I might cite many passages from the histories of Eusebius and Socrates, and the writings of Justin Martyr, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Hierom, Ambrose, Augustine, and several others, who, on that account, used to call the Lord's Day *dies panis*, (the day of bread); but it being a matter of fact so notour, I need not blot paper with quotations to this purpose."—*Willison's Sacramental Directory*—(Minister of the Church of Scotland).

The great Reformer of Geneva thus speaks—"And, indeed, this custom which commands to communicate once only in the year is most certainly the invention of the devil, whoever was instrumental to introduce it. When there was a law made for communicating once in the year, it came to pass that almost all, when they had once communicated, turned slothful and slept securely throughout the rest of the year. But it should have been far otherwise; every week, at least, the Lord's table should have been set before the assembly of Christians, and the promises therein set forth, upon which we shall feed spiritually; no man, indeed, should be compelled to come by force, but all should be exhorted and excited, and the sloth of the negligent reproved."—*Calvin's Institutes*, lib. 4. cap. xvii.

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# A BRIEF INQUIRY

INTO THE

ORIGIN AND TENDENCY

OF

# Sacramental Preaching-Days.

It is well known, that in all the Presbyterian connexions in this country, national and dissenting, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is attended with a number of extra preaching-days. The previous Thursday is *wholly* devoted to fasting, and prayer, and preaching. The previous Saturday is considered as a day of preparation, to assist in which two sermons are ordinarily preached. The following Monday is regarded as a day of thanksgiving, to assist in which exercise, two sermons are also preached. Besides, on the Sacrament Sabbath, especially in country places, there is usually an extra congregation, collected from the surrounding neighbourhood, to whom a number of discourses are delivered in rotation, from morning till evening. Few people, however, are aware that this practice is entirely peculiar to Scotland, and that, except among the descendants of emigrants originally from this country, it is quite unknown beyond the boundaries of ancient Caledonia.

What, then, is the ORIGIN of practice so singular, and of which the body of professing Christians in this country are so very tenacious?

1. It has no foundation in the Bible—neither precept nor example can be found there to countenance it. This is so universally admitted, that it would be unnecessary to stay to prove it. No one now pretends to find anything in the Bible bearing the most distant resemblance to a modern Sacrament.

2. This practice did not originate with the founders of the Presbyterian system in Scotland. In proportion as professors decay in vital religion, in that proportion do they become fond of external splendor and show—of a

multiplicity of ceremonies and holy-days. Accordingly we find, that as vital godliness declined in the primitive churches, ceremonies and holy-days were introduced and multiplied, till, at length, every trace of the primitive Christian worship disappeared; and the public profession of Christianity becoming a mass of the most ludicrous mummery—of the most childish rites, retained nothing of the religion of Heaven but the name. When the churches of the Reformation withdrew from Rome, they brought away with them, and still retain, too many of those meretricious ornaments, with which the man of sin debased the religion of Jesus. To the honor of the Scotch Reformers it must be remarked, however, that they were, in this respect, in a great measure, singular. They rejected all unscriptural ceremonies and holy-days, and adopted a mode of worship sufficiently simple, and well adapted to all the ends of instruction and edification. Of such a religious festival as is now called a Sacramental occasion, they never dreamed. The Directory for public worship, adopted by them, is not only silent on it, but inconsistent with it. Dr. M'Crie, in his life of Melville, speaking of the attempt of King James to establish a religious anniversary to commemorate his escape from the conspiracy of the Earl of Gowrie, on the 5th of August, 1600, says,—"This appointment was at variance with the principles of the Church of Scotland, which, ever since the Reformation, had condemned and laid aside the observance of religious anniversaries, and of all recurring holy-days, with the exception of the weekly rest."* This system, then, did not originate with the Reformers—was no part of the Presbyterian worship, as originally adopted in Scotland, and approved of by them.

3. It is not the result of the collective wisdom or combined sagacity of any of the great deliberative courts, that usually regulated the affairs of religion in Scotland, in former times.

Though we meet with acts almost innumerable, civil and ecclesiastic, enacting—enjoining—ordaining various things relative to religion, yet we look in vain for an Act of Parliament, of Assembly, of Synod or of Presbytery, enjoining that the administration of the Sacrament be attended with a routine of preaching-days. "It is to be observed," says Mr. Douglas, "that these days were not

* Life of Melville, vol. ii., p. 171.

all introduced at once, nor in consequence of any general consent, or preconcerted plan; for they are the mere offspring of incidental circumstances, and can claim no relation to wisdom and counsel as their parent."*

How, then, it will be asked, were they introduced? I answer, strange as the answer may appear, no one knows with certainty when or how! Were we tracing to its origin one of those customs which took their rise in the midnight darkness of Popery, disappointment were naturally to be expected; but that a custom that cannot boast of two hundred years standing—that has obtained so universally, and of which the body of the people are so tenacious—cannot be traced, but by conjecture, to its rise, is not a little curious! "They were introduced," says Dr. Mason, "like all other unwarranted rites—by stealth. They originate, perhaps, in accident; they are continued without design; the popularity of a name recommends them to respect; one imitates another: and thus, ere ever we are aware, they glide into the worship of God, and usurp the dignity of his institutions." And again, "It seems evident that they crept into the church by *degrees*; that *custom*, regardless of the reason of things, and equally tenacious of the wrong as of the right, transmitted them to posterity; and that undistinguishing habit, and the belief of the cradle, have numbered them with the ordinances of JESUS CHRIST."†

It is more than probable, that they were gradually introduced during the prevalence of Episcopacy, and of the cruel persecution by which it was introduced and established against the general sentiment of the nation, during the first forty years of the 17th century. In the course of this period, many godly conscientious ministers were banished to Ireland, where they preached with great success, and from whence they occasionally visited their native land, to preach to their countrymen. On those occasions, the people crowded from all parts of the country to hear them, and to enjoy the Lord's Supper in the way to which they had been accustomed. Nothing was more natural than that the people, who had literally a famine of the word of God, should, on those occasions, eagerly desire as many sermons as could be afforded; and that those godly men should, as far as possible, gratify them. Saturday and Monday sermons were, therefore, exceed-

* Dialogues on the Lord's Supper.—Dialogue 5th, page 116.

† Letters on frequent Communion.—Letter 6th.

ingly natural, when crowds were collected at the appointed places, on or before Saturday, who could not retire to their homes till the following week. It is indeed probable, that such occurrences, occasionally, at least, took place previously to the *height* of the persecution which drove them into banishment. While many of their brethren fell in with the prevailing practice, the people would naturally follow those who held by their own beloved system, and suffered persecution for conscience' sake; and the attachment of the body of the people to them, and their aversion to the Episcopalian and temporizing Presbyterian clergy, would naturally increase the violence of the persecution against them.

In Ireland, the zealous labours of those men produced a considerable revival of religion. "During this time," says Mr. Randal, "one sermon on Saturday, and one on Monday, was all that they had; and generally but one minister assisting during the whole."* From this extract it appears, that a practice to which persecution had given rise in Scotland, was continued, probably without the same necessity, in Ireland. We may, therefore, conclude, that when those good men returned to their native land, about the year 1638, they imported this practice into their former scene of labour, where it has continued with various modifications to this day.

The late Dr. Erskine, speaking of the origin of this plan, says, "I know no certain account of that matter. It began, says one, in the persecuting times, when many ministers under hiding, and the whole Presbyterians of a country, by stealth, got together. And when they met together for this end, (to eat the Lord's Supper,) it may be once in several years, they knew not how often to preach; and the people had a boundless appetite to hear, so long as they could subsist and be safe."†

As to Sacramental Fasts, Mr. Randal supposes that they are also from Ireland. "During the residence of the Scotch ministers in [illegible] country, they jointly held a monthly meeting for [illegible]; and frequently the Lord's Supper was celebrated [illegible] one or other of their parishes, on the following Sabbath. [illegible] know," says Mr. Randal,

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* Letter to a minister of the Church of Scotland, from his friend, concerning frequent Communicating.—Postscript.

† Dissertation on frequent Communicating.

"no such likely beginning to our Fasts before our Sacraments as this is." *

It is true that Mr. Livingstone preached on the Monday after the Sacrament at the Kirk of Shots, in the year 1630; but this sermon being preached at the particular request of Lady Culross, and with some reluctance on his part, proves that it was not then customary, nor understood to have any connexion with the Lord's Supper.

The foregoing conjectures of various writers, who have inquired into the subject, furnish us with the only probable origin of this system; and had it been laid aside when the cause which gave rise to it ceased to operate, it had been well. But the continuance of it without any adequate cause, or rational use, has done no little injury.

Before entering on the second part of the inquiry, viz.: the TENDENCY of this system, I must premise two things.

1. That I have no objection to week-day sermons, *as such*. It is the duty of preachers to "be instant in season and out of season;" and where people are ready to hear, the opportunity ought to be eagerly embraced; and may be expected to be followed with happy effects.

2. That I have no doubt that Sacramental preaching-days may have been made useful on many occasions, in the conversion of sinners, and building up of believers in faith and holiness. God has promised that his word shall not return unto him void; and whenever dispensed according to his own institution, his blessing may be expected with it. Yet notwithstanding these concessions, I maintain, with Dr. Mason, that this system is "attended with great and serious evils."† These evils may, perhaps, be comprehended under two heads—putting the Lord's Supper out of its proper place, and contributing to its profanation.

I. The system of preaching-days has put the Lord's Supper out of its proper place among Gospel institutions. That the Lord's Supper made a part of the public worship of the primitive churches, *every first day of the week*, admits not of rational doubt. What else would any man, unfettered by system, infer from the following passages, Acts ii. 42: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers." Here, the breaking of bread is mentioned, not as an

* Letter, &c.—Postscript.

† Letters on frequent Communion.—Letter 7th.

extraordinary occurrence, but as a part of the ordinary duties of stated public worship. Acts xx. 7: "On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." Here it is evident that one special design of their coming together on the first day of the week, was to break bread. 1 Cor. xi. 20: "When ye come together, therefore, unto one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." This shews that the *avowed* design of their coming together, was to eat the Lord's Supper; but that their *manner of doing it* was inconsistent with this design. These passages mutually illustrate and confirm one another; and it would be a violent wresting of them, to compel them to speak any other language.

Nor was this the practice of the apostolic church merely, but continued for ages the invariable practice of all Christian societies. The late Mr. Randal, after having minutely investigated the records of the primitive ages of Christianity, on this subject, thus concludes, "Consider then antiquity in what view you please, the elder or the later accounts;—consider it among enemies or friends;—view it in its truth, or in its lies;—in its simplicity, or in its superstitions;—consider all the accounts, which all sorts of men have given; take the evidence from as distant corners of the world, and opposite characters in it as you please, from those who have no bias, but to the truth, or from such, whose opinions and interests would lead them to give this subject a colour, if it could bear it,—and all with one voice shall declare, that to come together on the first day of the week to break bread, was from the beginning, and for many ages, the custom, the uninterrupted, unquestioned, undisputed practice of all Christian churches:—as much so, as it was their practice to sanctify the Lord's day, or to pray, praise, or preach the Apostles' doctrine on it;—that as this was the most distinguishing part of their worship, so was it what they and their worship was described by, and the action by which among themselves, the Lord's day was known, what consequently they would least and last of all have omitted, while any degree of the purity of the Gospel remained among them."*

The late Mr. Brown, of Haddington, is equally decisive on the subject: "That the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," says he, "was generally administered every

* Letter to a minister of the Church of Scotland, from his friend, concerning frequent Communicating.

Lord's Day, for the space of three hundred years, is beyond dispute."*

It appears that the Reformers were generally of the same mind on that subject, although from the rude materials on which they had to work, they were obliged to temporize. Calvin says, expressly, that "the Lord's table ought to be spread for his children every Lord's day." The Genevan Reformers introduced it monthly into their church, and it appears that the Scotch Reformers, as was to be expected, followed their example; for the "Book of common Order," supposes that the Lord's Supper was administered once a month. But with the present preaching appendages, it is impossible to make any thing like an approach toward the primitive practice. Thus a set of unscriptural holy-days—the mere inventions of men, have put the Lord's Supper out of its own place among Gospel institutions—have driven it into a corner. We find that in the Apostolic church, the celebration of the Supper constituted a weekly [illegible] of their devotions.

But from what particular reasons it hath grown into an Annual observance by any society of Christians, it is not difficult to say. It is owing to appending to it a preparatory and subsequent service, that hath no foundation in the original institution, and is no where supported by primitive practice. It is according to the institution, a plain and single devotional act, which may be performed as other religious duties, with the bare addition of external symbols. Indeed, it cannot be once supposed, nor do I know that it was alleged, that [illegible] primitive Christians in their distressed situation, could have fast-days, preparation, and thanksgiving-days; or that three, or four, or half-a-dozen of assistants and administrators could be collected together; such an apparatus was impossible, the Divine institution leads to no such an idea."†

Nor, let it be remembered, is the view of this subject maintained in this Inquiry, peculiar to those who act upon it. Presbyterians, both in and out of the establishment, have lately advocated the cause of weekly communion, by arguments that cannot be refuted. The writings of RANDAL and ERSKINE in the Establishment, of DOUGLAS and HUTCHESON among the Relief, and of

* Apology for the frequent administration of the Lord's Supper, page 6.

† Sermon by the late Mr. Gordon, Minister of Speymouth, published 1766.

BROWN and MASON among the Seceders, are well known, and well worthy of the attention of all who would inquire into this subject. I am glad to know, that a respectable Presbyterian congregation in Paisley, have been for years in the habit of eating the Lord's Supper monthly. I trust they are aware, that "they have not yet attained, neither are already perfect,"—that they have no more Bible authority for monthly, than they have for yearly communion; though the one be *nearer* the Divine rule than the other.

2. The system of preaching-days has put the Lord's Supper out of its place, in point of solemnity and importance.

The Lord's Supper is a very solemn, a very important ordinance; but that it is so in a manner, or in a degree peculiar to itself, is without proof in reason or in Scripture. What Paul says to the Corinthians on this subject, (1st Epistle, chap. xi.) arises not from any peculiar solemnity in this ordinance, but from the manner in which they prostituted and profaned it. All the ordinances of the Lord are solemn and important, and to profane any of them is highly criminal. The ordinance of Baptism, for instance, is instituted by the same authority, and designed to represent the same truth—the salvation of sinners by the death of Christ; must it not then be equally solemn, and equally important; and must not the abuse or profanation of it be equally criminal? Yet how few are there, even among Christians, who view the subject in this light—who would not shudder at the thought of placing Baptism on a level, in point of solemnity and importance, with the Lord's Supper. Now, whence does this supposed disparity arise? Not from the language of Scripture on the subject of these institutions, surely. "Baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," is, to say the least of it, just as solemn and impressive as, "Do this in remembrance of me"—"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." Not from the nature of these institutions, for if they are enjoined by the same authority—distinct parts of the same religious system, and designed to represent the same important truth, they must be alike solemn in their nature, and alike entitled to our reverence and veneration. It must arise, therefore, principally, from the spurious glare thrown around the latter by a parade of holy-days, and a train of

prescribed exercises, by means of which every other ordinance is thrown into the shade, and dwindles into comparative insignificancy!

3. The system of preaching-days has put the Lord's Supper out of its proper place, in the affections of the Lord's people.

These preaching-days have now been so long, and so closely appended to it, that they are viewed as an *essential* part of it; so much so, that to propose to lay them aside, would, in the esteem even of serious Christians, be nearly as bad as giving up the Lord's Supper. In fact, it is not eating the Lord's Supper, but the preaching-days, that in the estimation of the bulk of Christians constitute the *Sacrament!* It is these that constitute its main importance—its principal charm; hence appropriately enough called the *preachings*. Strip it of these external decorations—exhibit it in its native and primitive simplicity—introduce it as a part of the public worship of every Lord's day, and it will require no little training, to bring the minds of many Christians in this country, to view it without contempt. Such is the baneful influence of attempting to improve on the plans of Divine wisdom, and of adding to the institutions of the Lord! Besides, the false and fearful solemnity thrown over the Lord's Supper by these unscriptural appendages, contributes greatly to mar the peace and destroy the confidence of serious Christians in this delightful service. In place of eating the Lord's Supper with the confidence and freedom of children placed around their heavenly Father's board, they frequently approach with fear and trembling, their minds are possessed with fearful apprehensions of displeasing him, and so incurring his wrath; and their service is thus destitute of enjoyment, and their worship is often attended with a "spirit of bondage unto fear," unsuitable to their character, displeasing to God, and not a little distressing to their own minds. Now, with such apprehensions, and feelings, and views, the Lord's Supper cannot be approached with delight, nor regarded with affection. The preaching-days may be attended with pleasure, and with profit; but the table of the Lord is rather an object of fear, than of delightful anticipation—a scene of fear and trembling, rather than of filial confidence, and joy in God. Now, this state of things, which is by no means uncommon, must, in the case of Christians, arise in a great measure from the distorted views of its nature and

design which these extra days, with their usual services, are calculated to inspire. Whereas, when viewed in its native simplicity, unincumbered with human inventions, as a commemoration of the death of Christ, and a symbolical representation of the fellowship of all the children of God with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with one another in the enjoyment of the common salvation, it is calculated in the highest degree, to inspire the Christian's mind with confidence, and joy in God.* But, not only have the preaching-days put the Lord's Supper out of its proper place in every point of view, but they have,

II. Greatly contributed to its profanation.

This is, no doubt a serious charge, a charge that would need to be well supported, seeing they are professedly designed to prevent this evil: yet, I am persuaded, the charge will be found but too easily made out.

To profane a religious ordinance is either to render it contemptible in the eyes of men, or to apply it to purposes for which it was not designed. Now in both these respects, the Lord's Supper is greatly profaned by this unscriptural system—It is rendered contemptible in the eyes of all thinking men, whether religious or otherwise.

Contemplate, for a moment, the scene of a country Sacrament Sabbath. A number of the neighbouring ministers must attend, to assist—their parishes or congregations, if Dissenters, are left vacant. Should the day be favourable, the bulk of the population of these parishes crowd to the Sacrament; many, no doubt, from pious motives, but the multitude, principally youth of both sexes, for the same purpose for which they would go to a fair or a market—amusement and diversion, to see and be seen. Look at the bustle and confusion which the village presents; the roads and streets, and lanes, crowded with

* From the misapplication of such passages (Exod. chapters xix. and xx.) many of the best of Christians approach their reconciled God and Father with a slavish fear, like that of the Israelites when approaching the mount that burned with fire; or that of Peter when he said, "depart from me for I am a sinful man." They sit down at the table of the Lord, with as great terror as the high priest entered the holiest of all.—"Doubtless the seldom dispensing this ordinance has led many of the less judicious, into such melancholy superstitious apprehensions, and roused such terrors in their minds, that they could not attend upon God in this institution without distraction, and thus were deprived of much of the comfort and benefit, which otherwise they would have reaped from it."—*Erskine's Dissertation on Frequent Communicating.—Section 3d.*

comers and goers all the day long: look at the public-houses; the ordinary number in some places will not do; the publicans hire their neighbours' houses, and employ waiters to sell their spirits; every window presents some significant mark, to indicate what is going on within. Think of the bustle, the confusion, the noise, that this state of things must create; not to speak of the drunkenness, the quarrelling, and even fighting, that sometimes ensue; think on these things, notoriously true, and say, can this be a religious ordinance, a Christian institution? Is it not much more like a popish carnival, than a Gospel ordinance? In fact, it is undeniable, that the scenes of a country Sacrament have furnished a late profane wit with materials sufficiently appropriate for his "Holy Fair." What a degrading, what a contemptible view, do these scenes present to thinking men, of the holy institution of the Lord's Supper!! What must sceptics, and infidels, and scoffers of all descriptions, think of that religion, of which they are supposed to be a part! I know, it will be said, that these abuses are no part of the ordinance of the Supper. Why then, are they associated with it? Why are they appended to it? Why is a system continued, calculated to produce and perpetuate such abuses? Would the simple observance of the Supper produce such effects, if these unscriptural appendages were given up? Impossible. While this system is continued, these abuses will follow it; and all attempts to persuade men of the difference between these abuses, and the system that gives birth to them, will prove vain and fruitless.

In an overture of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, dated October 5, 1748, we find the following remarkable declaration, in exact unison with what has been said above:—"That the manner in which this holy ordinance (of the Supper) is administered amongst us, greatly obstructs the more frequent administration of it; and particularly, the number of sermons, on such occasions, and the many parishes thereby laid vacant upon the Lord's day, are accompanied with several great inconveniences, if not also, too often, with *scandalous profanations of that holy day*.—That it would be for the interest and *honour* of religion, that some method were devised, whereby these abuses might be avoided, and the Lord's Supper more frequently administered, agreeably to the word of God,

to the apostolic practice, and to the practice of the primitive church."*

But this system tends to the profanation of the Lord's Supper in another, and a still more serious light; it becomes the grand means of prostituting it to carnal, unrenewed men.

The Lord's Supper is intended for those only who are his disciples, who love the Lord Jesus, who feel interested in his death, and who therefore can remember that death with those grateful and pious feelings that are suited to the exercise, pleasing to God, and profitable to the soul. All others, be they outwardly sober or profane, moral or immoral, are without any right to it, without any just views of it, without any advantage from it, and consequently only prostitute and profane it. But it is notorious, that multitudes, who give not the most distant evidence of conversion to God, will be found seated at the communion table, on the Sacrament Sabbath. Now, to this prostitution of this sacred ordinance, these services greatly contribute. The design and meaning of them, is to assist intending communicants in a train of previous preparation, to fit them for this important service. Hence the announcing of the Sacrament, some weeks before, becomes a sort of distant warning of the necessity of beginning preparation. But on the preparation Sabbath, a number of duties and exercises, in the view of the approaching ordinance, are prescribed; which, from their immediate connexion with it, are not understood to be necessary on ordinary occasions. Now, from what is ordinarily said on these occasions, people, even the most careless and irreligious, commonly infer two things—that going to the Lord's table is an important duty, a duty which it would be very criminal and dangerous to neglect, and which, being performed, will be attended with some special, though mysterious advantage, such as, eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, &c.; and, that a regular attendance on the public services of the week, and some attention to the personal exercises prescribed, will prepare for the due performance of this necessary duty. With the idea thus impressed upon their minds, that the would-be holiness of a week will compensate for the unrighteousness of a year, [illegible] secure the favour and approbation of God, what is to be expected, but that multitudes without faith, without repentance, without holiness,

* See Dialogues on the Lord's Supper, p. 49—Note.

without love to God, to his law, to his Son, or to his people, should, after a few formal prayers, and other prescribed duties, during the Sacrament week, be found at the communion table, on the Sacrament Sabbath, in the expectation of clearing scores with their Maker, who will as naturally, and as certainly, turn again to their vices, as the dog to his vomit, or the sow to the mire!

It is impossible not to see what a ruinous lure this must become to multitudes of precious souls, what a sad and fearful prostitution of a sacred ordinance, and what a distorted view of the simple and holy religion of Jesus, it must present to the world. Whereas, let it be exhibited in its scriptural frequency and simplicity, let it be divested of the parade of extra services that now mar its beauty, and obscure its meaning: let people be taught that it is not any course of prescribed preparation, but the possession of a previous character, that gives right to it, and benefit from it, and it will, by the blessing of God, go far to prevent these evils.

"Frequent and simple communion," says Dr. Mason, "will probably purge the church of unworthy members. Perhaps there could not be devised a more effectual expedient for getting rid of them, than employing them in spiritual work. With abundance of formality, they may attend to the notorious *externals* of religion: and as a bridle to conscience, and a set-off to character, they may have no objection to the communion, *if it be not too often*. Once or twice a year will do. But strip this precious ordinance of the additions that nurture legality, and flatter pride; let it be as plain as the Bible made it, and as often as a believer needs it; let there be nothing to render it impressive, but its subject, or alluring, but its spirituality; and mark the consequence. The former zealot will cool. Novelty, decency, example, may secure his compliance for a while; but it will be strange if his impatience do not at last get the ascendancy. Without affection to Jesus Christ, he will tire of His Supper. Without a principle of spiritual life, he will count spiritual worship intolerable; the more spiritual the more intolerable; and the holy communion, the most intolerable of all. His soul will loathe the heavenly manna, and by degrees he will drop off."*—"Are there not many now," says Mr. Randal, "who bear the fatigue of waiting on a

* Letters on frequent Communion, Letter 9.

yearly Sacrament, for different reasons, who would tire of an habitual continuing in what they have no relish for, or a church tire of them?"*

The late Mr. Brown, of Haddington, accounts, in the following rational manner, for the original deviation from the primitive frequency and simplicity of the Lord's Supper.—"When the church began to share the smiles and support of the Emperor, and his court, multitudes, influenced by carnal motives, thronged into it, and they were easily admitted, though indeed many of them were far from being visible saints. These carnal and court Christians disliked being from week to week employed in self-examination, and other preparatory work, or living under the impression of so frequent and solemn approaching to God. They also disliked the simplicity of this, as well as other gospel ordinances, and were mightily fond that the Christian worship should be modelled as near the Pagan and Jewish forms as possible. The clergy, possessed with the same vitiated taste, and besides, being very solicitous to procure to themselves the favour of the great, transformed the Christian worship according to these patterns."† To the same purpose, speaks the late Dr. Erskine—"In the fourth century, defection from the primitive purity of the church, began more and more to appear. The most probable cause I can assign for this is, that till then the religion of Christ being persecuted, few professed it, who had not felt the power of it on their hearts. But soon after, Christianity becoming the established religion of the empire, a greater number of hypocrites, from views of wordly interest, intermingled themselves with the true disciples of Christ; and in a century or two more, this little leaven leavened the whole lump."—"Such nominal Christians could have no just sense of the use and benefit of the Lord's Supper, and the obligations to frequent it. Having only the form of godliness, without the power of it, it is no wonder that the frequent return of religious exercises should be uneasy and disagreeable to them. Their example would soon be followed by lukewarm Christians, who had fallen from their first love."‡

From the foregoing extracts, we see to what these respectable Presbyterians attribute the first departure from

* Letter to a Minister, &c.

† Apology for frequent Communion, p. 11.

‡ Dissertation, &c., section 2.

the simplicity of Christian worship—to the introduction of crowds of unrenewed men into fellowship with the churches; and if similar causes produce similar effects, wherever this practice is continued, all attempts at scriptural reformation will be defeated by these characters. We need not wonder that the Reformers, with all their influence, could not carry their reformation, on this head, to anything like the Bible pattern, or to what they themselves saw to have been the primitive practice; when we consider that multitudes embraced the reformed doctrines, who gave no evidence of conversion to God, and that all who became Protestants, were admitted to fellowship with the Protestant churches. Principal Baillie, of the University of Glasgow, one of the Commissioners from Scotland, to the Westminster Assembly, in one of his Letters, says, that *not one in forty of the members of the best reformed churches*, gave any evidence *of true grace and regeneration!* How is it possible that such churches could be reduced to anything like scriptural order or discipline, or that such fearful crowds of unconverted men could be brought under the influence of the authority of Christ, or of the love of his simple and holy institutions? And in proportion as this state of things continues, in that proportion is reformation, in regard to the Supper, or any other point of scriptural order, unattainable. I am persuaded that there are now very few godly ministers, who have thought at all on this subject, who are not convinced in their consciences, that the Lord's Supper *was designed*, and *continued for ages to be a weekly institution of the Christian dispensation*; and that, consequently, sacramental preaching-days are not only unscriptural inventions of men, but also the cause of *much delusion*, the source of much self-righteousness, and the occasion of a dreadful prostitution of this sacred ordinance.

But then, as most churches are now composed and constituted, they are aware that any reformation, worthy of the name, is quite out of the question. Hence they endeavour to make the most and the best of things as they are. Indeed, when men prove to a demonstration, that the Lord's Supper was for ages a weekly institution with the followers of Christ, with what grace can they insist, as Randal, and Erskine, and Brown, and others have done, on a reformation that would only carry it to three or four times a year! There is something so in-

congruous in it, that thinking men rather let it alone altogether, than lay themselves open to the charge of such inconsistency.

On the whole, if sacramental preaching-days be in their origin modern, in their nature unscriptural, in their tendency injurious—if they have put the Lord's Supper out of its place, and surrounded it with a spurious solemnity—if they have marred its native simplicity, and obscured its genuine meaning—if they become the grand means of alluring carnal, unconverted men, to prostitute this sacred institution, and to deceive and ruin their own souls—if they give the world an unscriptural view of Christian institutions, and become an effectual barrier to reformation on this head, (and Presbyterians have often acknowledged, and deplored as much,)—if so, it is high time they were laid aside; and it is high time, too, that Christians, and especially Christian ministers, were seriously inquiring, how shall they be able to answer to God, for supporting and countenancing a system, so unscriptural in its nature, and so hurtful, to saints and sinners, in its tendency: and that too, it may be, in direct opposition to the convictions of their own minds! To conclude, let the reader attend to the following queries, by the late Mr. Brown:—"Whether is it grace or corruption that most affects to add human devices to God's worship, to make it more splendid than Christ has left it? May not persons be as really guilty of popery, by doting on the splendid pomp of Divine ordinances, that consists in the variety of days, sermons, and ministers, as by doting on the variety of fantastic ceremonies used in the popish mass? Ought we not to beware of adding to God's ordinances, as well as of taking from them? Is God content to barter with us on this point, by giving up with frequent communion, if we will annex a few more days, sermons, ministers, and people to it, when seldom administered? Where does he either make, or declare his acceptance of, this proposal?"*—The reader is requested to endeavour to answer these queries, in his own mind, as in the sight of God.

* Apology, &c., p. 37.

LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS, TORONTO.

# ON PREPARATION

FOR

# The Lord's Supper.

In a Letter from a Minister to one of his stated Hearers.

FRIEND,—I have been so impressed about the circumstances in which I saw you last Lord's day, that I cannot refrain from telling you what I think and feel relative to your conduct. May the Holy Spirit of all grace guide my heart and pen, and so engage your attention, and impress your heart in reading, that our labour in writing and reading may not be in vain.

Think not that I am about to accuse you of any of those crimes which are punishable by the law of men. In this respect, you may be as blameless as Paul was before his conversion. Neither suppose that I am about to rank you with those who scoff at our holy profession, for you attend all stated seasons of worship, and last Lord's day you appeared much impressed at the time of dispensing the Lord's Supper. But I was grieved on that occasion by observing that you ranked not with the flock of Christ, but with the promiscuous multitude—an observer indeed, but not a partaker of this feast of love—a hearer, but not a doer of this part of the will of Christ. How you felt on the occasion, and whether you reckon your conduct sinful or justifiable, I know not. God knoweth. But I shall, in love to your soul, now set before you the loss and the danger attending your present conduct.

1. Want of a connection with a church, prevents you from performing many important christian duties. You cannot do God's house-work but in his house. You cannot perform the duties of fellowship while out of church-fellowship.

2. Your present conduct is an open violation of all those laws which command the observance of Divine ordinances.

3. When you see the Lord's table covered, and all things ready, and remember that you also are invited to come to the feast; your refusing to come, bears an appearance of "making light of it."

4. By neglecting christian ordinances, you lose all the present advantage, and future rewards, which a right performance of them would afford.

5. You deprive yourself of the blessed enjoyment of God in his ordinances.

6. You exclude yourself from the love, and care, and sympathy, and support of brethren.

7. You deprive yourself of the use of various means of sanctification, and who can tell how far it may be owing to this cause that some secret besetting sins continue to have dominion over you.

8. You lose the advantage and comfort of evidence of an interest in Christ, arising from doing his commandments.

9. You lose the rejoicing proceeding from the testimony of a good conscience, that you are walking so as to please God.

10. You lose the benefit of the obligation arising from making a profession, to walk so as to support that profession.

11. In standing aloof from the Church of Christ, you withhold from it all the advantage which the right performance of social duties would afford.

12. By ranking with the promiscuous multitude, you strengthen their hands, in making light of the feast of love, and in working out their own ruin.

13. By walking contrary to the will of God, you forfeit all claim on his promised blessing, and expose yourself to the punishment of neglected duty, and unoccupied talent, in the day of judgment.

What an alarming estimate of loss and of danger have you now read! Will you then lay down this paper for a little, and pause, and pray, and allow this weight of evidence to come home to your heart, so as to work convic-

tion and repentance. I have set these particulars in numerical order before you, that you may see and feel your danger; and what adds incalculably to this estimate, is the danger of losing your soul also by neglecting the appointed means of salvation.

Perhaps you now begin to feel pressed and disposed to fly for refuge: and I know whither you would fly. You wish to make a refuge of your alleged unfitness for christian duties. Are you not, at this moment, and while you thus read, disposed to say in your heart, How can I go to the Lord's table, while so unfit for that ordinance? Now, I readily allow, that your neglecting this ordinance, is evidence of your unfitness for observing it; for if your heart were right with God, you would not disregard his revealed will. It is owing to something wrong in the heart, that every professing christian does not attend to the Lord's Supper just as scripturally, and frequently as Christ has commanded.

But why are you unfit for observing the Lord's Supper? Perhaps you say, because I am a great sinner. But why do you continue in this condition? Have you not heard of a Saviour? and has not this Saviour offered you pardon, and peace, and acceptance, and preparation for all the duties of time, and for all the glories of heaven? Has he not been saying to you, Wilt thou be made whole? Wilt thou be made clean? Has he not made all things ready for the feast, and given you a cordial invitation to come and be prepared for it, as well as to enjoy it? Your unfitness for this ordinance, is therefore a very great sin and a very great shame.

Is your unfitness then a proper excuse for neglecting this ordinance? Most certainly not. It is the duty of all men, at all times, and in all places, to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded; and it is their duty to do so in faith, and with a willing mind. I allow, that whatsoever is not of faith, is sin: and he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself. But whatever may be your present condition,

it is your duty to repent and believe the Gospel without a moment's delay, and proceed henceforth in faith to observe all things that Christ hath commanded.

But perhaps I have mistaken your case. You probably conceive that you have repented, and are willing to attend to christian ordinances, but that you are not yet determined with whom you shall unite in religious fellowship. If so, you tread on difficult ground, you walk on slippery places, and stand much in need of being put on your guard against the numerous snares to which you are exposed. The maxims of the world—the influence of carnal relatives—wordly interest—the fear of man—dread of the cross—love of the praise of men—and the desire after the gratification of fleshly propensities, all stand in the way of scripture obedience: and every thing wrong in the imagination of your own heart, will lead you to make a wrong choice as to your religious connections. I would wish you therefore, first of all, to solve the important question, Whether in the choice of the church you may join, you wish to please yourself or God? If you are minded to please yourself, it matters little with whom you unite; for fellowship formed from such a motive, is altogether foreign to acceptable obedience: If, on the other hand, you feel the importance of being determined by what will please God, you will readily perceive that nothing will answer that purpose but what is purely scriptural: And in proportion as the saving love of the truth disposes you to follow the Bible only, so will your soul loathe and abandon the spurious inventions of men. Now I feel confident, that after reading those numerous passages of scripture, which express the Divine displeasure against impurity of communion, and which command the Lord's people to separate from the ungodly, and from those who have only a form of godliness, but deny its power; you will not be able to unite with any church of mixed character, with a hope of pleasing God. Nor will your conscience allow you to unite with any church whose order and government tend to bring you

into subjection to the will of men—to prevent you from obeying some of the laws of Christ, (particularly that law, Mat. xviii. 15–17), or to deprive you of means and liberty to serve him in all things, with an enlightened and willing mind.

Observe, my friend, that God will not accept the observance of the Lord's Supper, unless it is done scripturally. When the Corinthians departed from the scripture rule in attending to it, Paul said, "This is not to eat the Lord's Supper." Unless it is observed in communion with proper characters, and according to the Divine rule, and for the ends of Divine appointment, it will neither please God, nor profit your soul.

Do not deceive yourself, as some have done, by supposing that if your own heart is right in the service, form, and manner, and connections are of small importance. A right condition of heart will follow the right ways of the Lord; and without regard to the Divine will, the most specious appearance of seriousness and devotion, is only an abomination in the sight of God.

But you are probably settled in your mind as to the principles of scripture order, only you think you need time to prepare for eating the Lord's Supper. If this is your case, I fear you are mistaken as to the nature of preparation, and I conceive that mistake consists in making this preparation your own work, rather than the work of the Lord. If you think of preparing yourself, you indeed need much time,—much more time than you will be allowed to have in the world,—and all this time and labour, with all you can expend on other physicians, will leave you nothing better but worse: but if you employ Christ to prepare you, he will do it speedily. All things that Christ has provided for preparing you for the feast, are ready, and on demand, for all who will seek and receive them freely. What then can you gain by taking time for preparation? Will Christ be less willing to bestow preparatory blessings this day, than next month, or next year? Will your own heart be better disposed to seek

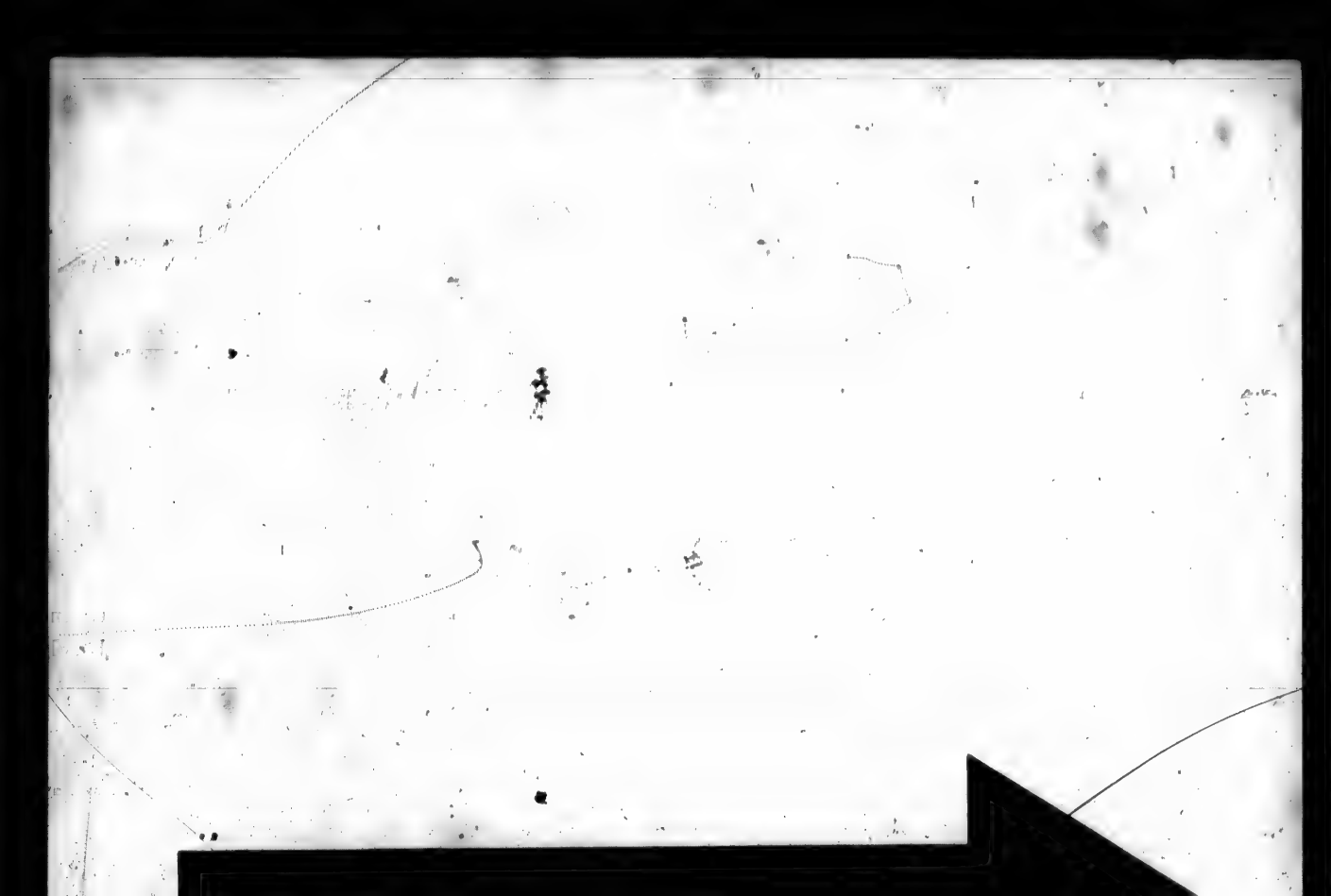
and receive them when you have grown older and more hardened in sin than at this present moment? Will Satan be more willing to part with you after you have served him a while longer, than when you first thought of turning from him to the living God? And besides, it is by practice that all the Lord's people are prepared for doing his will. What would you think of preparing to labour the ground, without putting the hand to the plough? What would you think of a few days or weeks' preparation for sucking, before bringing the child to its mother's breast? Alas, my friend, I fear that your plan of preparation, would end in starvation and death. It was not after this manner, that the primitive disciples were prepared to eat the Lord's Supper. *On the same day*, they heard the Gospel, and "were pricked in their hearts," and "gladly received the word," and were "added to the church" for continuing "stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and of prayers." Nor is there an example in the whole of the New Testament of one acknowledged to be a believer, living out of connection with a christian church, and in the neglect of christian ordinances.

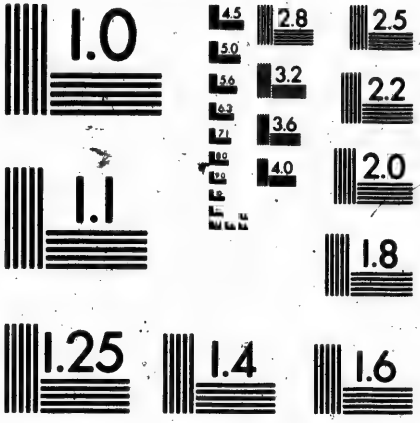
Are you, like some, afraid of making a public profession, lest you should dishonour Christ by sinning after it? This is a most singular caution, for one to be afraid of doing what is right, lest he should afterwards do what is wrong. But why are you not afraid of dishonouring Christ by making no profession, or by sinning before you make a profession? Why are you not afraid that sin, in either case, will wrong your own soul? And why are you not stirred up by your fears to attend to what is necessary to keep you from falling? If you are afraid of falling in God's ways, what security have you against falling in your own ways? And what reason have you to think that standing in your own ways will afford you good standing in the day of judgment? Or supposing you are in danger of falling in either way, whether it is better to fall in circumstances where no man will care for your

soul, or among brethren who will labour to restore you "in the spirit of meekness?" Indeed, I cannot wonder that you [illegible] falling while you stand out of the way of [illegible]tion. While unconnected with church, [illegible]ing without the vineyard, [illegible] the day idle, [illegible] regards the work which God requires you to do in the vineyard. You are standing on the enemies' ground, exposed to their snares and assaults, and excluded from the watchful care of brethren, and the strengthening influence of Divine ordinances. Properly speaking, this is a fallen condition, from which you need to be raised.

Some have pleaded for delaying the observance of the Lord's Supper, till they got removed from some ungodly family, or neighbourhood, or companions, from whom they are exposed to strong temptation. Have you ever reasoned in this way? It is like refusing to take medicine till you are recovered from disease. It is like refusing to put on armour till you have escaped from the enemy. If you are exposed to temptation, you stand in greater need of the appointed means of preservation. Were you properly concerned about the condition of your ungodly associates, you would rather resolve speedily to exhibit before them a full and consistent view of the christian profession, with a view to awaken and win them to Christ. Were you truly alive to the honour of Christ, you would lose no time to confess him, and glorify him before those in whose presence you have formerly dishonoured him. Beware lest you be ashamed to confess Christ before them: for he hath said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," Mat. x. 32.

But you are probably hindered by some near and dear relatives, or companions, who though they make a profession of religion, are avowed enemies to that kind of communion which your conscience approves as being



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scriptural. I know of no influence that is more likely to stumble the weak and unwary: and I know of nothing that is better calculated to deliver from it, than the effectual working of that impressive saying of Christ, "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

But you will say, "I have been thinking of waiting on some of my friends, with the hope of bringing them along with me." And what if they should keep you waiting till death come, and find you never having once shewn forth Christ's death at his table? What would have become of Lot had he waited in Sodom till his wife was brought out of it? You know not whether any of your friends will ever be disposed to go along with you. It is more likely that they may succeed in bringing you along with them to a worldly communion, than that you should bring them along with you to a scriptural communion. If you would bring your friends forward, you should go before them and show them a good example, and give them proof of the sincerity of your profession. So long as you act otherwise, you will give them occasion to think lightly both of the ordinances which you neglect to observe, and of yourself in recommending to others what you will not touch with one of your fingers.

Some outer-court worshippers excuse themselves in not uniting with scriptural churches, alleging that bad characters are found among them as well as among other churches. If you are so impressed, I beg your attention to the following considerations:—

1. Taking into account the very strong popular prejudice against these churches, and the consequent disposition to "speak evil against them falsely," you should be very cautious in taking up an evil report against them.

2. If you have heard of bad charactors being found in these churches, you have also heard of such being

put away. It is not the occurrence but the wilful retention of open sin that constitutes the corruption of other churches.

3. Though it may be true that some who have sinned have been retained; it may be true that they have repented, and that all has been done for purging the church from the effects of their sin, and for restoring them to fellowship, which the laws of Christ require.

4. You may err in expecting more purity in this imperfect state, than the scripture account of human nature will warrant. It is not lawful to put away a man for every fault. The scriptures speak of the "weak," whose infirmities must be borne with much long-suffering—of "uncomely parts," whose rash, imprudent, uncourteous behaviour gives cause of grief to the brethren, and offence to the world—of disciples walking disorderly, who are not to be counted enemies but admonished as brethren,—and of occasional swelling and tumults arising from remaining corruption which must be subdued by the influence of truth. But such defections of christian character, differ very widely from the total want of christianity which is so manifest in the ignorance and gross immorality which mark the character of the majority of worldly churches.

5. It is possible that you may be privy to some fault which is not known to the brethren, and for which they are therefore not accountable. But perhaps you are not aware that in that case the sin lieth at your door, for it is just owing to your not being a member of the church, standing in your place and doing your duty towards the offender as commanded in Mat. xviii. 15–17, that such offence is not removed.

I know not whether you are of the number who are stumbled at weekly communion; but I know that you are exposed to the influence of some who are clamorous against it. And what are the characters who oppose it? We never heard of disciples, either of primitive or modern times, who attended to weekly communion, complaining of its frequency. Those who thus complain, are

persons who attend to that ordinance very seldom, and, in other respects, not according to the rule of scripture. Now I protest against their judgment on the following grounds :—

1. Having had no experience of weekly communion, they are not competent judges whether it be attended with good or evil.

2. It is necessary for such to reason against its frequency, in order to justify themselves in attending to it so seldom.

3. It is owing to want of proper enjoyment of the ordinance, that such object to its frequency. I hold it as a general maxim, that the human mind desires frequent use of what affords enjoyment. When the Gentiles enjoyed the doctrine which Paul preached, they "besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath." And I am sure, that all who enjoy the Lord's Supper, will desire to have it dispensed to them next sabbath. From my own past experience, as well as from the testimony of others, and what may be inferred as a consequence of departure from scripture rule ; I am persuaded that, generally speaking, the *Sacrament Sabbath*, as it is called, is not a day of rest and gladness, but of bondage and heaviness. How can it be otherwise? The great mass of the communicants, on such occasions, are characters to whom the sabbath itself is a weariness, and who regard these extra services as a restraint on their wonted carnal pleasures : and those among them who have obtained a Bible instruction, are likely either to be smitten by the remonstrances of their own conscience against their unscriptural conduct, or so hardened by obstinate neglect of known duty, as to be incapable of being rightly exercised, either about the evil of sin, or the joys of God's salvation.

I have my fears too, that many reason against frequent communion, in order to provide for frequent indulgence of sin. I cannot conceive how any can urge the impracticability of preparation for weekly communion without meditating the appropriation of some interim season of laxity for the purposes of fleshly gratification. No one who admits the obligation to be daily prepared for death, can argue against the practicability of weekly preparation for the Lord's Supper. And those who are otherwise minded, would likely be very content with having the Lord's day, and every thing connected with the

Lord's word, and ways, as seldom intruding upon them as the Lord's Supper.

But you may have some *secret* reasons for halting, which you are not willing to avow. Are you afraid of the cross? If you cannot bear the cross, you cannot be a disciple. If you cannot bear the cross, you will remain under the curse. Do you love the praise of men? You may obtain it by following the ways which please men, but this gain will cost you the loss of the praise of God. Are you stumbled at the poverty and smallness of the number of some of the churches, as if you could readily unite with such as the thousands at Jerusalem, while you cannot find it in your heart to take up with such as the twelve at Ephesus? This would shew that your mind is in quest of something else than the obedience and enjoyment of truth; for Divine truth, and the presence and enjoyment of the God of truth, are the same among two or three, as among thousands.

Does your halting proceed from some secret sin hardening your heart—separating between you and God—preventing your access with confidence to him in his ordinances? This is an alarming case. "Be sure your sin will find you out." He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh findeth mercy." If you cannot get your sin destroyed, it will destroy you. Repent and bring your sin to the cross that it may be crucified: and have recourse speedily to that frequent review of the cross, in this ordinance which God has appointed as a means for preventing your sin from having dominion over you.

Having thus adverted to some of the probable causes of detention, I shall now bring to view what is necessary for overcoming them, and for inclining your heart to keep this feast of love. Christ says, "If ye love me keep my commandments." He wants you to love him, because love will overcome all your difficulties and prejudices, and render your obedience easy, and profitable to yourself, and pleasing in his sight. And surely poor lost sinners have good reason to love him who loved them, and gave himself for them. He had compassion on them when there was none to pity. He provided for the payment of their debt when they had nothing to pay. He accomplished for them a full and free salvation when they were lost and helpless. And he accomplished all this by his death in their stead, as a fruit of his eternal love

to their souls; O my friend, this is most melting, and winning, and constraining. It is by believing this, that the burdened sinner is delivered from fear and bondage, and inspired with hope, and confidence, and joy before God. It is this that makes willing to bear the yoke of Christ, and to bear his cross—to follow him wholly, and to count it good to draw near to him at his table.—If you believe in Christ, you may well remember him at his table, who remembered you on the cross. You may well remember him weekly in this ordinance, who remembers you daily before his Father, and watches over you every moment. You have good cause to shew forth his death, for it is the life of your soul, and to remember his love which has procured for you all the good you possess, and all you have in prospect, and to love him who first loved you.

While you read this, you may probably pause and say, "Well, this is just what is wanting. Had I enough of love to Christ, I would cheerfully go to his table; but while I feel so cold and lifeless, I dare not venture." But your not having gone sooner to the Lord's table, is perhaps the main cause of your want of love. Your love must wax cold, if you neglect what is necessary to exercise it. Your natural appetite, would be in as bad condition as your love, if you were as backward in the use of what is needful for the body. What if the neglect of this duty be the very thing that has hardened your heart so that you cannot love the Saviour? You cannot love one whom you have injured, till you repent and act dutifully towards him. You are now acting injuriously towards Christ, and will never love him but in doing his will. You have long halted between two opinions. If you would find rest to your soul, and serve your generatian, and honour the Saviour, hear his voice, and do his will, and do it quickly. For behold he cometh quickly, and will render to every one according to his works.

I am yours, sincerely and faithfully,

* * * * *

LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS, TORONTO.

# CHURCH STANDARDS.

## LETTER

FROM A

## CONGREGATIONALIST TO A CHURCHMAN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You ask me with an air of surprise how I could venture to unite with a body, not only differing so widely in its constitution from the Presbyterian church, but which gives no public pledge of orthodoxy, such as our forefathers deemed essential to the purity of a Christian church and to its safety from the inroads of heresy. I do not at all wonder that you should, on the latter ground, so strongly object to the course which I have adopted. I at one time felt the force of the objection as powerfully as you can do, nor did I, let me assure you, adopt any summary mode of disposing of it. I had every inducement on this as on other grounds to defend my position, and could I have done so to the satisfaction of my own understanding and conscience, I should certainly not now be the apologist of what with unfeigned sincerity I once condemned. The agitation of the voluntary controversy, I am free to acknowledge, produced an entire change in my mode of thinking on religious subjects. I had not been accustomed to refer to the word of God in defence of my religious principles; much less had I impressed upon my mind the importance of maintaining that divine truth, as revealed in the Scriptures, is the ONLY perfect rule of faith and practice. Having, therefore, been driven in the defence of my views of ecclesiastical polity to the Bible, as the only source of authority and law, I was led naturally, and indeed inevitably, to submit to the *same* test my views on collateral subjects, with the firm determination to defend nothing, however hallowed to my associations, except what should appear, according to the best of my judgment, to be warranted by divine revelation. I shall not trouble you with a detail of the circumstances which led me first to doubt the

necessity or expediency of church standards. It will be enough that I briefly state to you the process by which I arrived at the conclusion, that I could with perfect safety and consistency unite with a denomination which not only disclaimed the use of these so-called safeguards of orthodoxy and uniformity, but actually esteemed them as unnecessary, nay pernicious.

I had never heard of church standards being pleaded for on the ground of scripture precept, or example; though, from the importancce attached to them by those bodies who hold them, the contrary might be expected. They are pleaded for on the ground of expediency and necessity. Now, I at once allow that many things are both expedient and necessary, for which we have no direct precept or example in the word of God; but such things will always be found in harmony with the *spirit* of divine truth. In the outset of my enquiries, it seemed to me very like implying a reflection upon divine truth as imperfect, to plead for the necessity of human compositions occupying the place which church standards do. I, therefore, was led to inquire, What are church standards, and whence arises their necessity? Here my inquiries branched into the following particulars:—

1. *Are they a plainer and clearer statement of the leading truths of the Bible than is given in the Bible itself?*

They do not profess to be a *translation* of any portion of the word of God; they imply, therefore, no reflection upon the received English version as such. If they are held to contain the leading principles of the bible better arranged and expressed, and in a manner less liable to perversion, than in the bible itself, it is implied directly, that words which man's wisdom teacheth are better than those in which it seemed good to the Holy Spirit to convey to men a knowledge of the will and character of God. Such an implication, those who plead for the necessity of standards would at once deny. I would not urge it, then, more especially seeing that there is not a scriptural principle expressed in any standards, with which I am acquainted, which is not found as clearly and explicitly stated in the bible itself as language can admit of. It would be strange indeed, and involving an imputation of defective wisdom on the part of God, if a revelation intended for all should not in its great leading disclosures be intelligible to all.

2. *Are they expositions of divine truth?*

Then, as the works of fallible men, they must be fallible. I may consistently subscribe to an exposition while it accords with my judgment; but can I, with a distinct recognition of human fallibility, pledge myself never to teach any thing contrary to that exposition? Am I bound to conclude, that the authors of the standards arrived at the perfect exposition of divine truth, and that my private judgment is never to lead to any other conclusion than that to which in any case they may have come? Am I to deny the possibility of error, deny that there is a *progress* in the knowledge of truth, and that some of the principles which I have solemnly bound myself to adhere to and to teach may possibly be erroneous? Can I recognise *authority* in any human exposition, and yield to that authority without giving up the main principles of Protestantism? If the standards be expositions, I may hold to them just *in as far as my judgment directs*; but that is to deny their authority, and to place them beside Henry, and Scott, and Doddridge, as friends to be consulted, not as absolute masters to be implicitly obeyed.

3. *Are they symbolical, that is, are they abstracts of divine truth?*

Abstracts may be useful, but when made by imperfect men must necessarily be imperfect. Is the bible inconveniently large, or difficult of reference? If not, whence the necessity for abstracts regarded practically as of equal authority with the bible itself? In your church courts reference is made almost exclusively to the standards—a direct appeal to the Scripture is deemed unconstitutional. Whence the ground for this deference to an abstract, and whence the security that those who prepared it gave every truth its place, and its due share of importance? Whence the consistency of conducting the most solemn ecclesiastical trials upon the understood principle of forbidding an appeal from human formularies, to the truth of God as dictated by his Spirit, and which is more clear, more simple, and as accessible as any human composition can be? I can appreciate the standards as abstracts of divine truth, and find them as *such* useful; but I cannot give to them the place or authority of revelation, which would be tantamount to acknowledging them as infallible.

4. *Are they tests of orthodoxy?*

They can only be so in as far as subscription implies belief in the principles they contain, and in so far as these principles themselves are in accordance with divine truth,

But does subscription imply belief? Then, why not subscribe to the last page of revelation? Is it that the language of Scripture is more equivocal and less intelligible? That will not be pleaded. What rational grounds, then, for subscription to articles of belief in the mass, as in the "Confession of Faith?" A man of principle can only subscribe the Confession in the sense in which he understands it, and that from various causes may be in very important particulars widely different from what was intended by the compilers. An unprincipled man will subscribe even with the knowledge that he does not understand the words of the formula in the sense of the compilers, or that he does understand them, but virtually rejects them. What might thus have been anticipated in theory, has been established in practice. The worst of errors have sprung up in those bodies requiring subscription to standards. This will not be denied. If the propositions contained in the "Confession of Faith" were put to the candidate for subscription one by one, and a *bona fide* assent required to each, there might be deemed some plausible use in subscription, but this is impracticable. There being no security, then, for soundness of sentiment, from the fact of subscription to human tests of orthodoxy, more than to the bible itself, it is preposterous to uphold what is demonstrably so absurd in itself, and which has proved so futile in practice.

5. *Are they designed to secure uniformity and purity of doctrine?*

Then uniformity and purity should be found where standards are upheld; but is it so? In the Church of England every form of heresy is rife, and not more than a third of its ministers teach the doctrines to which they subscribe in the thirty-nine articles. The subscribers to a Protestant creed are the bold, zealous, and untiring advocates of Popish doctrines and forms. In the Church of Scotland the distinction of *moderate* and *evangelical*, is not one which refers to church politics merely, but to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. In the other churches which hold by human standards, there *are* differences respecting the most important truths of christianity, notwithstanding strong affirmations to the contrary. How can human standards, even supposing them to be perfect, promote purity? Can they be supposed better fitted to do so than the oracles of the living God? Does not the assertion of their necessity for that purpose imply a defect

in divine revelation? But, supposing the standards to be pure, what necessary connexion is there between purity of doctrine in a book, and purity of doctrine in a religious body? It may be true that a body holding to the doctrine in their standards may be pure; but does the purity of the book imply the purity of body? If it does, why is not every denomination that assumes the name of christian pure, when they profess to take the BIBLE for their standard? If the purity of divine truth does not secure the certain purity of those who profess to adhere to it, what superior excellence attaches to human standards, or to divine truth thrown into the form directed by human wisdom to secure that purity? It is a monstrous delusion to assert that the purity of a church is to be judged of by the purity of its standards. Truth in the book is not necessarily truth in the heart, nor are the rules of holy living in the book to be identified with holiness of practice in the life. The knowledge of divine truth is progressive, and it would be extremely absurd to bind the minds either of teachers or taught, to a rigid adherence to the views of truth held by those who lived ages back. In as far as they attained to the knowledge of the truth, there is little danger of deviation from their views; but why should the mind be trammelled in its researches? Are we to rest at the point of attainment marked in the fallible productions of men? Why shackle the understandings of all succeeding generations by demanding implicit reliance upon that which must necessarily be admitted to be imperfect? Again and again have church standards been altered; always, however, in opposition to their *tendency*, which is to prevent change for the better as well as for the worse. Divest the standards of their *authority*, that is, let them be a code of opinions not binding, and deviation from which involves no anathemas, and I have no objections to them. Do we then make void all authority in respect to religious principle, and allow every man with impunity to believe and propagate whatever seems good in his own eyes? Certainly not. Heresy is to be detected by an appeal to the only perfect standard. By the dictates of inspiration alone may we condemn or approve, not daring to substitute any other standard which has not the stamp of heaven.

6. *Are the standards subordinate?*

Then I ask, In what sense? It is vain to give them such a designation while the practical use made of them

would indicate that they are supreme. Is it meant that they are less perfect than the divine word? Then why adopt them, when that word itself is of as easy reference, and its statements respecting every essential doctrine as plain and explicit as can be conceived? Is it that they are of inferior authority? Then why designate them standards? and why in all cases of trial in ecclesiastical courts are they appealed to, to the exclusion, except by a half-extorted courtesy, to the word of God? Why are the most momentous questions affecting the character and spiritual interests of parties implicated in charges of heresy settled by a reference to them exclusively? Where standards are acknowledged, it is absurd to say that the word of God is the *only* rule of faith, unless it be pleaded that the standards are the word of God. Where is, then, the subordination? What can be conceived of as better fitted to exhibit the standards as of supreme authority than that they should be referred to in all disputed points of doctrine and discipline, and that in no case can there be an appeal from their statements to those of the word of God? One would suppose from the use made of the formula, that they were an improved edition of the statute-book of heaven, and instead of being subordinate, that they were in all senses superior to the bible. There is, indeed, one sense in which their inferiority may be indicated, and that is, that they are not made the text-book in public teaching. In some instances, they are even made to occupy this position, and in all cases, though not directly the text-book, they furnish the doctrines to be taught, for every one who subscribes the standards is bound solemnly not to teach any thing contrary to them. They are thus *the tests to which divine truth is to be brought*, and should the preacher in his prayerful study of the scriptures arrive at conclusions contrary to the articles of subscription, he is bound to suppress them, however important in his view, or to choose the alternative of seceding from a body whose principles he cannot maintain.

Possibly there may be some other grounds for the defence of church standards which I have not specified. If there be, I am not acquainted with them. I have looked at them with an honest desire to defend them if defensible; but the more I have examined their claims the more thoroughly convinced have I felt that they are baseless. You may deem my language strong and irreverent; but it is the language of unhesitating conviction, not only that they utterly fail to secure the benefits they are pro-

fessedly intended to secure, but that they are positively injurious. They diminish the reverence due to the word of God—they render public teaching formal, technical, and obscure,—they restrain scriptural research,—they fetter the intellect,—and they promote delusion. I once, like you, thought that where they were discarded, error and impurity must widely prevail. My theory is overturned by indisputable facts. Than the body with which I have seen it my duty to unite, there cannot be any more harmonious in doctrine, or more uniform in practice. All that is really valuable in human compositions is available, while the obnoxious element of authority is excluded. The ablest theologians of which Britain can boast, were men who despised the exclusiveness of formularies, and pursued an independent course of research, taking the guidance of preceding labourers where it approved itself, but not slavishly bound by human opinions, as having the authority of law, or inspiration itself. Though I reject church standards as such, I do not depreciate the excellencies of the doctrines they contain, nor would I hesitate to subscribe to most of them, as containing a fair statement of my religious principles, but not conceding to them the authority and weight which their advocates claim, nor sanctioning implicit confidence in them, as they are but the productions of men. I may fail to convince you of the truth of the views which I have expressed. I have merely given you a brief and imperfect statement of the reasons that have led me to alter my views respecting church standards. However unsatisfactory they may appear to your judgment, they may perhaps diminish the surprise excited by my venturing to unite with a body which acknowledges as their standard the Bible and the Bible alone.

Here I might conclude my letter, but I think I am warranted, after assigning my reasons for rejecting church standards, to ask you to consider seriously the validity of those reasons. If the Bible alone should be the test and standard of doctrine and duty to individual believers, or to a church, then authoritative standards, whether ancient or modern, are inexpedient and unnecessary. But this is not all: they are positively wrong; they are to be abandoned. Submission to them trenches upon the authority of Christ. To come under solemn obligation to hear and hold by them, is to become disciples of men; to acknowledge other masters than Christ, and to make void the law of God by human tradition. The faith of the adherents to such standards, so far as that faith bows to

the authority they claim, stands in the wisdom of men, not in the power of God.

The question, be it remembered, is not at all respecting the *orthodoxy* of any particular standard. I have already stated an objection founded on the acknowledged imperfection of all such compositions; but should a confession of faith and formulary of worship be compiled perfectly faultless to the best of my judgment, I would as sternly refuse to subscribe my name to the document as if it were filled with the grossest error. I object to the *principle* altogether. I cannot bring myself into bondage to any man's system of opinions, even though, according to my present degree of light, they may be true and sound. I cannot bind myself to make no advance in knowledge, and no improvement or extension of the views I entertain of divine truth as unfolded in the scriptures. Along with such an obligation, I should at the same time bind myself to give up reading the bible; or, which is the same thing vow never to admit a ray of light from that divine source more than I have already received.

Some people think and say that if standards after all do little good, they do as little harm; that they are useful and very helpful, as giving a systematic view of truth, and so on. I freely admit that they may be useful as *books*, while at the same time I maintain that they are hurtful and ought to be renounced as *standards*; and it is in this character we have to do with them. I may have no quarrel with the Confession of Faith, as to doctrine, and when I was a Presbyterian I saw nothing wrong in the chapters upon discipline, church government, the power of civil magistrate in ecclesiastical matters, and so on; but with my present views of *standards*, I would withhold my subscription on the ground that, by appending it, I should be guilty of admitting human authority in matters of religion—robbing Christ of his glory, and the Bible of its honour; thus virtually renouncing my best hopes, and trampling on my strongest convictions.

You have expressed surpise that I should venture to unite with a body of christians bound together by no standard of truth but the Bible. Allow me to express my surprise that you can continue in communion with a church which acknowledges any other authoritative rule.

I am, yours, &c.,

Greenock.

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# Congregationalism:

## ITS CHARACTER AND CLAIMS.

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The Presbyterian form of church government has long prevailed in Scotland. In its early struggles with Episcopacy, the mind of the nation was all but unanimous in its favour. Having been incorporated with the State in this part of the island, the people have been long trained under its ministrations, and, till the present century, there has appeared no rival to its claims likely to gain much favour. The various secessions from the church established by law, and supported by the State, which have occured within the last hundred years, still retain the Presbyterian form, and are, to this day as attached to it as those from whom they separated. Matters are very different in England. Many of the dissenters from the Established church there are Congregationalists. The Presbyterians are few, and consist in a great degree of Scotchmen, or their descendants, who continue to prefer the forms of worship and church order, to which they had been accustomed in their father-land.

About the begining of the present century, many pious people in Scotland had their attention turned to the nature of a scriptural church. The consequence was, that many conscientious and enlightened christian people left the church of the Establishment, and other Presbyterian communions, and formed themselvels into churches upon the Congregational model. These churches, are at present upwards of a hundred in number. They are found in all the cities and large towns in Scotland. They are scattered over the length and breadth of the land. Their preachers have penetrated into the remotest and most neglected districts, and, through their efforts, the

gospel has been preached in many parts of the Highlands and islands, where, but for their services, the people must have long remained beyond the reach of the glad sound of salvation.

In addition to these churches of the Congregational order holding paedo-baptist sentiments, there are also not a few others observing the same order, and as rigidly adhering to what they consider to be the apostolic model, of the anti-paedo-baptist persuasion. And before the rise of those modern churches, there were a number of small christian societies, known by the name of the *Old* Independents, as distinguished from those of more recent origin. It is not the design of those pages to trace the history of such churches, but to enter upon the brief examination of a subject, which their actual existence among us must often suggest to an inquiring and observant mind. What are the respective claims of the Presbyterian and Congregational forms of church government? What sanction does the New Testament give to the one rather than to the other, and by what authority may the latter intrude upon ground so long occupied by the former?

It may not be superfluous here to make the obvious remark, that questions of religious truth and duty are not to be determined by their prevalence in this or that locality or by the date of their adoption. Had the doctrines of the Reformation been tested, when Luther arose, by the number of those who adhered to them, the system of Popery could have shown an overwhelming majority; and so the errors of the many would have borne down the truth recently found by the few. In like manner, were the claims of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism to be decided by the priority of their appearance in any particular place, it would follow that the one might be scriptural and right in Scotland, and the other in England, both true in America, and neither in Sweden. It is surely needless to expose by argument the falsehood of the principle, that in religion the soundness of a creed,

or the correctness of a practice, is to be determined by its antiquity, unless we go back to the highest christian antiquity—the apostolic age ; or by its prevalence, unless it can be shown that doctrines are popular in porportion as they are scriptural—and gain favour with men in proportion as they savour of the simplicity that is in Christ. That we may be able to answer the question, what are the respective claims of the two forms of church government and order before us, it will first be necessary to examine what are the distinctive peculiarities of each.

It might be thought that no intelligent member, either of a Presbyterian or Congregational church, could remain ignorant of the real points of difference between the respective bodies ; and yet, to an astonishing degree, ignorance does prevail. Were the question put, What is the chief distinguishing peculiarity between the two systems, many would at once reply, that the Congregationlists insist upon evidence of true conversion to God, as necessary qualification for membership, while the Presbyterians require no more than a "*credible* profession," meaning by this phrase, a competent measure of christian knowledge, and a good moral character. Without stopping for the present to examine the accuracy of these terms, or the precise import of them, as used and understood by the respective parties, it is to be observed, that purity of communion, or a pretension to it, may be a characteristic mark of the one party or the other, but is not *necessarily* the distinctive peculiarity of either. The difference between the two systems consists in this, that the government of a Presbyterian church is vested in the minister and elders constituting the Session ;—in the Presbytery, consisting of the ministers within the bounds, and one ruling elder from each parish or congregation, deputed by his brethren ;—of the Synod, composed of the presbyteries, and constituting, in the various bodies that have seceded from the Church of Scotland, their highest court of review, while in the Church of Scotland itself and in the Free Church there is the General Assembly, formed

of representatives both lay and clerical, from all the Presbyteries within the jurisdiction of the Church. To the General Assembly, appeals can be carried from the lower judicatory, and its decisions are final, unless the matter be removed out of the Church altogether, and carried to the House of Lords.

In Congregational churches, *all* the members, with the pastors and deacons, in their own persons administer their own church affairs. The nature of ordination, and the powers conferred by it, Presbyterians regard in a different light from Congregationalists. The former say, that the power of ordaining belongs exclusively to the pastors of the church, and neither solely nor conjointly to the christian people. (*Brown's vindication of the Presbyterian form of Church Government.*) The latter maintain, that without the previous choice or consent of the church over which a pastor is to preside, no act or ordination can invest him with office or authority in the church.

Acknowledging no ecclesiastical power but itself, each church claims the entire control of its own concerns, and of course surrenders all claim of right to interfere authoritatively in the decisions of any other church. There is consequently no right of appeal from the decision of the church to any higher tribunal, no representative government, and no ecclesiastical supremacy—all being subject to Christ the great Head of the church, and to Him alone.

From this statement it appears, that the differences between the two schemes are of no small importance. They seriously affect the rights and duties of the people, as well as the rank and prerogatives of the clergy. If the bishops, or pastors, and elders ought to exercise sole authority in the church, the members of the church having neither voice nor vote in their assemblies, then it must be the usurpation of a right not belonging to them, which members of Congregational churches claim, when they deliberate and decide upon the admission and exclusion of members, and every other matter of discipline,

arrangement, or enterprise, connected with the body. On the other hand, if the members of the church have a right to hear, judge, and determine for themselves in all such matters, then it must be an act of gross injustice to deprive them of the right; and for the ministers and elders to take the entire rule into their own hands, must be to exercise a spiritual despotism utterly foreign to the genius of the gospel, and subversive of the great principles of the Protestant Reformation. That Reformation rescued from the hands of a dominant hierarchy, a usurped power over the consciences, liberties and lives of the people. So far as its principles were recognised and acted upon, it gave the people duties to perform, and rights to enjoy. They were no longer ciphers to swell the value of the clerical units that stood at their head, but had individual importance, and individual responsibility, and collective power.* It is but justice to Congregationalism to add, that it maintains the independence of the Church upon the State—rejects, therefore, the theory of a National Church—declines all government grants, or endowments, because these more or less involve the right of State interference and control—denies the right of the civil magistrate to exercise any jurisdiction within the church, and guards the interests of religious liberty with equal jealousy against the encroachments of sacerdotal assumption, and of secular power.

The question, then, between Presbyterians and Congregationalist, being one which involves interests so important, is surely one on which the New Testament may be expected to throw a clear and satisfactory light: and to that authority alone must the appeal be made. If it be the will of Christ that the government of his church should be vested in spiritual courts, rising in regular gradation of power, and extent of jurisdiction from the Kirk Session, whose acts reach only to one congregation,

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* See the subject touched upon in the foregoing paragraph, fully illustrated in the Tract entitled, "What is a Church of Christ?"

to the Synod or General Assembly, whose authority is acknowledged over an entire region, we should naturally expect to find the clear traces of this system in the inspired statute book of his kingdom. There must be a *jus divinum* for it, otherwise it has no claims upon christian men beyond those of mere expediency. If, however, the great lines of another and a simpler form of Church Government are actually drawn in the New Testament, then THAT must be adopted in preference to all the schemes which the wisdom of man may have devised, or the power of man may have enforced, or the ambition and pride and presumption of man may have sought to impose, under the sanction of divine authority.

It is in the highest degree improbable that Christ has left a subject of such importance to be determined according to the ever-varying and often-erring judgments of men. We may therefore consult the New Testament in regard to it, in the confident hope that if we do so, with a single eye, we shall assuredly learn the will of the Lord.

There are few defenders of the Presbyterian polity who now maintain the *jus divinum* principle, and therefore it is unnecessary to enter upon the formal examination of the arguments from scripture. But if that ground be really abandoned, it is enough to say of any other that may be resorted to, that it is confessedly suspicious and untenable. One author, (Brown) whose work in vindication of the Presbyterian form of church government has long been considered the palladium of the sect, has said, that "he has no wish that presbytery should be retained any farther than it can be supported by scripture, and the moment that it is proved that it cannot be so supported, he will be happy to see that it is rejected by the world." (Introd. p. 7.) This is nobly said, and yet it is artfully said; for it is fitted to inspire readers with the same confidence in the scriptural goodness of the cause which seems to have dictated it; and though the author has been long since driven from his main positions, he never acknowledged the fact. Presbytery has not been without able

advocates since the time of the author here referred to, but they cannot be reviewed here. He must be a hardy man man who will now undertake to prove that the Presbyterian Courts of Review from the Kirk Session to the General Assembly are framed according to a divine model; that one church has a divine pattern for interfering authoritatively with the proceedings and decisions of another—that the ministers and elders with or without consent or sanction of the members of the church, constitute the rightful judicatory in all ecclesiastical matters—and that the office-bearers either alone, or along with the people, have a right to legislate in Christ's Church. It would be strange, indeed, to pretend to be able to produce a warrant from Christ's own word, to invade his prerogative and usurp his office as sole Lawgiver and King. It is safer and easier to rest such claims on the ground of expediency. The fifteenth chapter of Acts used to be referred to as containing proof, that in the primitive church there were assemblies called for the decision of questions from churches. Congregationalists reply that this might be granted and yet that chapter be appealed to in vain as authority for the gradation of sessions, presbyteries and synods—as authority for there being a representative for every church or congregation, or presbytery interested in the question—as authority for considering one portion or section of the church subordinate to another. In short, unless the Presbyterian Courts of Review correspond to the assembly of apostles and elders at Jerusalem *in every point* as their divine model, it is vain for them to plead for the Church Courts of presbytery as deriving any countenance from this portion of scripture.

The limits of this tract demand compression, and instead of discussing and refuting the arguments sometimes adduced for the divine right of presbytery, we may arrive by a shorter road at our conclusion, by simply stating the leading characteristics of that system, and exhibiting the corresponding features of Congregationalism; we shall then leave the reader, after comparing the two, to say

which of them is commended to his judgment and conscience as conformable to the mind of Christ.

1. Presbytery gives undue power to the clergy, and, of course, by doing so, deprives the people of their just rights. Even the lay members of the presbytery—the elders, are in the nomination of the ministers, so that even as representatives of the congregation, they are not chosen by those for whom they act.* Nor are they responsible to the congregation for any of their proceedings. This is certainly a direct violation of the apostolical precedent, as shown in the election of the deacons of the church at Jerusalem, (see Acts vi. 3.) "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. *And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and* THEY CHOSE Stephen," &c.

2. Presbytery assumes the power of making laws, enforcing obedience, framing standards, creeds and confessions; requiring subscription and adherence under pains and penalties.—And so

3. Presbytery brings all that profess it under obligation to obey other laws than those of Christ—enforces compliance with human regulations under the sanction of ecclesiastical authority, and so accounts resistance to statutes of man's framing, as resistance to the ordinance of God. This may be viewed either as elevating human authority to a level with divine, or bringing down the authority of Christ to an equality with that of his servants, to whom he has delegated no powers to make laws in his house, or to exercise lordship over his heritage.

4. Presbytery, by admitting the principle and practice of appeal to higher ecclesiastical courts, violates the spirit

* We believe that in some presbyterian communities, this evil is in the course of being corrected, and that the voice of the people is permitted to be heard in the election of elders.

of submission to the decision of christian brethren, which Christ enjoins, subverts the authority of each church in governing and exercising discipline upon its own members, and often renders nugatory the sentence of the church compelling the members of it to hold fellowship with those who have been adjudged unworthy of the privilege; and, by consequence, tempting the church to bear with them that are evil, and to connive at known offences against the laws of Christ, under the consciousness of inability to enforce compliance with them.

5. Presbytery, whether endowed or unendowed, established by law, or in separation from the establishment, recognises by its standards, the right of the civil magistrate to maintain, by the power of the sword, the *true religion*—meaning by that term—itself. It is, therefore, in its spirit hostile to religious liberty; and although disarmed, and therefore impotent, yet, until it renounce the tenet of the right of appeal to the secular power to uphold and defend the truth, it must be regarded as virtually denying the pure spirituality of Christ's kingdom, and its independence of the kingdom of this world.*

It may be said that characters are here ascribed to Presbytery which are not essential to it, but may happen to be adjuncts or peculiarities of certain existing Presbyterian churches; and that these may be objectionable, or given up as indefensible, while the system itself may stand clear of all blame.

On this one or two observations are offered:—

1. It may be admitted that some part of the above objections to Presbytery may attach only to certain sections of the Presbyterian church; but it is with the system, as we see it embodied in existing communities, that we must take its likeness, and not according to some ideal church freed from all the evils which actually adhere

* Some sections of the Presbyterian Churches [illegible]s country object to the article in the Confession of Faith respecting the power of the civil magistrate in religion; and so they fall not under this charge.

more or less to every church framed according to the model in question.

2. There are two ways in which the difference between Presbyterians and Congregationalists may be viewed,—theoretically and practically.

If we look simply at the *principles* of the respective parties, we must say that Presbyterianism does not *necessarily* require that its adherents seek State support, or that they set up standards of doctrine, or demand subscription to creeds and confessions, or that they substitute a nominal profession of christianity for a well authenticated and sustained *credible* profession, as the requisite for communion; or that they are lax in the exercise of discipline. On the other hand, it is *not essential* to Congregational principles that churches formed on that plan abjure creeds, or that they be rigid in the requirement of evidence of conversion as a necessary qualification for church membership, or that they be strict in discipline, prompt in applying the laws of Christ to every case as it occurs—but if we regard the *practice* of the respective bodies, we may be led to see that, generally speaking, Presbyterians do adopt confessions of faith, repudiate the practice of requiring evidence of conversion to God as the qualification for admission to communion with the church, and are lax in the exercise of discipline. Many Presbyterians, at the same time, hold it to be the duty of the government to endow *their* church, and divide the land among them as the portion of their inheritance, recognising their own ministers, and them only as the legitimate and duly authorized religious teachers of the people!

Again, if we look at Congregational churches, and see them adhering to the inspired volume as their sole and sufficient standard of doctrine and duty—if we see them maintaining purity of communion as a principle, and in practice so adhering to it, that how much soever they may be occasionally deceived in the admission of individuals unworthy of christian fellowship, they are kept few,

and poor, and unpopular, because they will not purchase influence and respectability, and the friendship of the world, by widening the door of admission to their fellowship—if, moreover, they decline, on principle, the acceptance of government endowments, and if they do all this in strict conformity with their professed adherence to what they believe to be the apostolical model of church government and discipline, we can draw an inference from the practice as well as from the theory of the respective parties. And what is that inference? It is that the spirit of the two systems of ecclesiastical polity is different—that the one is favourable to scriptural purity, to strictness of discipline, to reverential regard to "the law and the testimony" as the only rule and standard; while the other, being fenced about with human contrivances to preserve purity of doctrine and practice, is in greater danger of substituting form and profession for the power and vitality of the truth—is lax in admission to communion—slow to exercise discipline, and, in attempting it, cramped and cumbered by the machinery of its church courts and right of appeal to judicatories, removing the decision of questions to judges who can exercise no moral control over the parties subjected to their jurisdiction, and little interested in them.

Of Congregationalism, moreover, it may truly be said, that purity of communion *is essential* to the proper working of the system. A church formed on that model is ruled solely by the laws of Christ, carried into effect with the concurrent sanction of the members of the church themselves, not by representatives or delegates. The laws of Christ's house are adapted to a society of believers—of regenerated men—and *can* be observed by them; but in a congregation composed of other elements—of unconverted men and women—they *cannot* be observed—they would be found quite unsuited to such a community, and the administration of them would soon be found utterly impracticable. The laws of Christ are spiritual; a church of spiritual men can understand them, and sub-

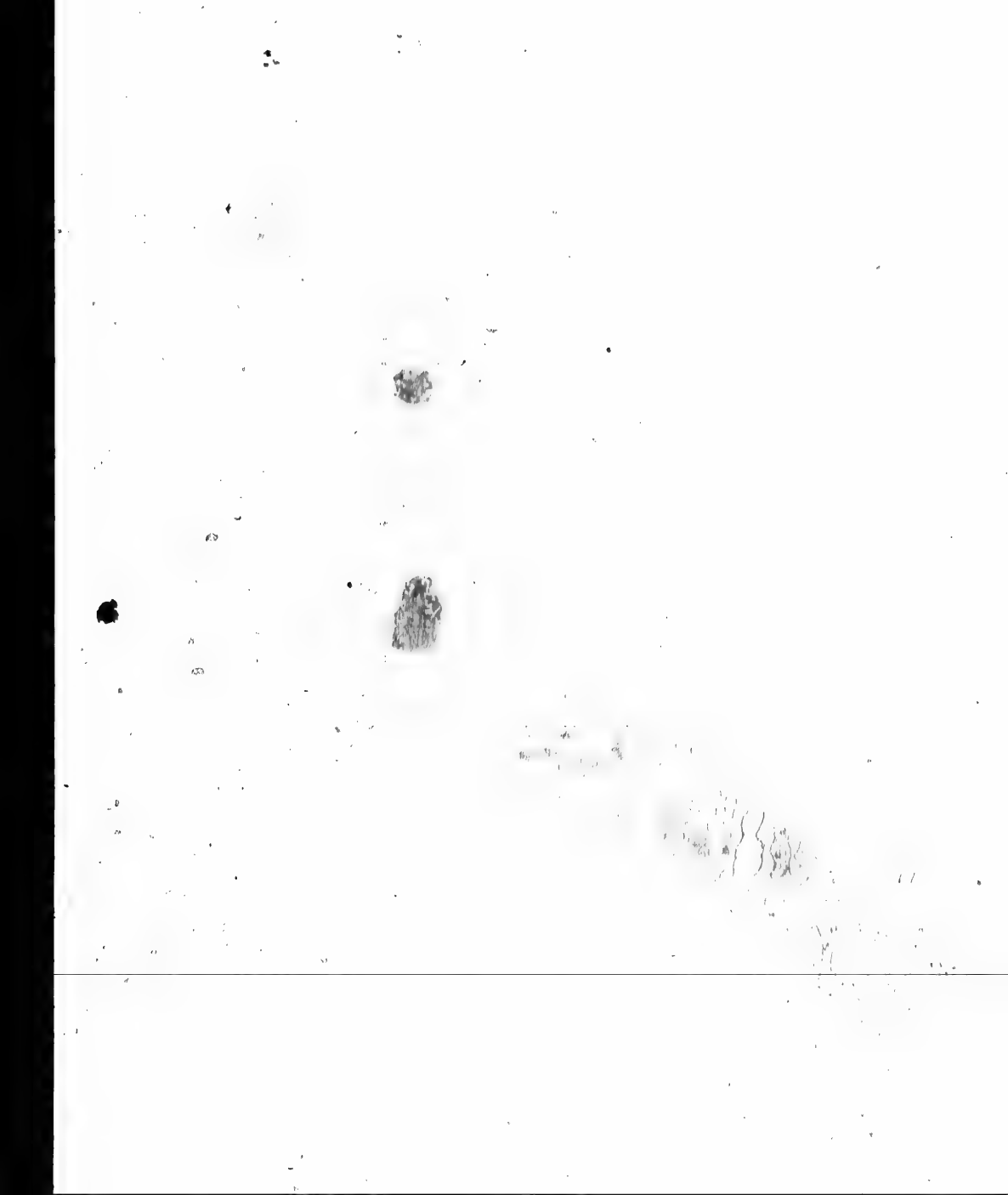
mit to them, and apply them; and a Congregational church in which purity of communion is preserved, finds its high privilege and true prosperity invariably connected with the maintenance of the laws of the Lord and Master in all their divine authority.

There is nothing, however, in the constitution of a Presbyterian church, ruled by a kirk session, and held together by other bonds than those of christian love, and mutual confidence, to prevent the working of its machinery, though purity of communion were quite disregarded. It may be composed of persons who do not profess to recognise each other as true believers, but only as nominal professors, and as they are not required to take any part in church matters, that being left to the ecclesiastical court, they have nothing to do as church members for which they feel themselves disqualified; and they are not taught any mutual duties of watchfulness over each other—nor the exercise of any discipline, nor any responsibility for the proper spirit and deportment of their fellow members of the congregation—all such things being left to their ecclesiastical rulers, and whether performed or omitted, are regarded as no concerns of theirs. In short, this system is quite well adapted to a wordly society, and needs neither holy materials nor a vigilant oversight to keep all in due order and form. But a Congregational church, unless composed of real Christians, and its affairs administered in the true spirit of christian faithfulness, purity and love, must speedily fall into confusion, and if a remedy be not promptly applied must go to pieces, exemplifying the maxim that the best things when corrupted become the worst.

This statement, if correct, (and we invite our readers to examine its correctness), may warrant us to submit a question, which might go far to determine the conflicting claims of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism to be the form which Christ intended his churches to assume. If of two schemes of church government, it can be affirmed and proved, that the one can be carried on, all its forms

attended to, and its working uninterrupted, although the laws of Christ be neglected, and although the parties concerned be not true Christians; while of the other scheme it is equally demonstrable that its working is practicable only on the supposition that the members of the churches are, so far as human judgment can discover, converted persons living under the influence of the truth, and obedient in all things—which of these two schemes tried by this test must we conclude to be the right one? Surely that to which purity of communion is essential, and to which promiscuous admission to ordinances, and laxity of discipline would be fatal. We cannot hesitate a moment which has the better claim to be regarded as that which has the Divine sanction. The one can flourish and extend just as true believers multiply. The other may spread itself over an entire region, and embrace the mass of the population within its pale, whether they be real Christians or only nominal professors. The one will be according to the model of the churches in Judea, to which believers in the Lord were added; the other a worldly society baptized with a christian name.

These pages are written less with a view to unhinge the minds of Presbyterians in regard to their form of church polity, than to confirm Congregationalists in theirs. It has been the character of the churches of the latter denomination, to be more zealous to make converts from the world, than to make proselytes from other sections of the christian church; but many of the members of the Congregational churches have become converts and proselytes at the same time. Many such having been connected with Presbyterian congregations while yet unconverted, the question of church government gave them no concern, until their eyes were opened to see their dangers as sinners, and the way of salvation through the blood of the cross. Then they perceived the spiritual nature of Christ's Church as composed of disciples like themselves, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and renewed in the spirit of their minds. Christian fellowship with genuine disciples



as a body, they could not enjoy where they were, though individual believers might belong to their congregation; and therefore they joined a church composed of materials such as Paul referred to when he spake of "gold, silver, precious stones," composing the spiritual fabric he and his fellow-labourers were rearing to be a habitation of God through the Spirit—men and women who gave evidence that they were believers in Christ, having received the faithful word, and abiding in it, bringing forth fruit unto God. It is the fashion with some who belong to the State Church, and other communions that cannot plead the rule of scripture for their ecclesiastical order, to pretend that the mere outward form of the church is a matter of comparatively small importance—that it is but the scaffolding of the building, and that if pure doctrine and holy practice be maintained, all is well. We admit the relative inferiority of questions of church order to the vital doctrines of the christian system, but we demur to the figure of the *scaffolding*. We are rather disposed to regard the form of church government as corresponding to the *plan of the house*—the arrangement of the apartments suited to the offices, duties, and privileges of the inmates and the great purposes of Him who is the Lord of the house—the church of the living God; and if HE has drawn the plan, it is at our peril if we alter it.

The readers of these pages are reminded in conclusion, that whatever be their professed principles in regard to church order, their belonging to the purest and most scriptural church on earth, will stand them in no stead in that day when Christ shall sit as a refiner of silver, and purge out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity unless they are truly His. Then he will judge men not by their profession, but by their character; not by what they have been called, but by what they are in truth and reality.

Meeting a man who gives no evidence of being a Christian, we should never think it worth while to inquire what were his opinions on the subject of church govern-

ment, nor to set him right if we thought him wrong. We should rather press upon him the necessity of belonging to the true Church of Christ himself. With these views, Congregationalists would think it but a small point gained to have succeeded in convincing an unbeliever who professed Presbyterian principles, that the other was the more scriptural form. O, what avail scriptural opinion either in matters of doctrine, or in points of church order, while they are *mere* opinions! and when there is no repentance towards God, nor faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, what will it profit to have arrived at correct views of the scriptural form of church goverment! Seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof—seek to have a name and a place in it, and be not satisfied with merely speculative notions of what it is.

Thus would we address every inquirer—and commend this attempt to explain and enforce some points touching upon the scriptural order of the Church of Christ to His benediction, and to the serious attention of all into whose hands these pages may come.

Finally, we would remind our brethren who profess Congregational principles, that they will in vain seek to convince Presbyterians of the superior excellence of their scheme of church polity, unless they can point to the superior purity of life and consistency of character of the members of churches formed on what they deem the scriptural model. The best argument, that our churches are formed on the New Testament pattern, will be their being distinguished for New Testament purity, love, zeal, and holy activity, seeking to diffuse the savour of Christ around them. Thus did the primitive churches approve themselves, by their unfeigned faith and holy deeds, adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour. Unless we can appeal to such credentials, that our churches are scriptural churches, no one will care for our pretensions, drawn from our boasted strictness of discipline, or simplicity of order, or rigid adherence to scriptural forms. Unless we surpass Presbyterian churches in purity, con-

sistency, zeal and love, we may spare ourselves the trouble of inviting a comparison of their claims with our own; for, if ours be the more scriptural scheme of church polity, our love should glow with a warmer flame, our light should shine with a clearer lustre, and "without controversy" we should be acknowledged as churches walking in the beauty of holiness, adorned with the graces of the Spirit, and glorious in the eyes of the Lord.

LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS, TORONTO.

# AN ARGUMENT

IN FAVOUR OF

# INFANT BAPTISM.

SECOND EDITION, ENLARGED.

THE fact that we practise Infant Baptism should be esteemed a sufficient evidence that we are sincere in the profession of it, unless something appear to the contrary; yet some Baptists, (I say not all,) working themselves up to a strong conviction of the absurdity of the thing, and its utter destitution of all evidence, either from Scripture or the nature of things, feel it a difficult matter to persuade themselves that we do not violate our conscience when we baptize children. If then a confession of our faith must be given in order to gain credence, I freely and firmly declare mine: I believe that the baptism of infants is divinely appointed; I believe that the apostles practised infant baptism; and I believe this on the best of all evidence, namely, because they themselves have told us that they did so. Now, if I can make this appear, if I can shew that the apostles tell us that they practised infant baptism, I shall sufficiently account for my own faith, and perhaps establish that of others, if not make some impression on the belief of those who oppose our practice.

I shall introduce what I have to say by referring to a remark of an old author, who says, If our translators had rendered the Greek word *oikos* (in our translation *house, household,*) *family*, the sect of Baptists had never existed. Now, *family* is the literal translation of the Greek, as is maintained by the best critics.* And what is a *family?* Who are the persons referred to when we say, How is the family? or of such a person dying, he, or she, has left a large family? surely, the children. There can be no family without children. A man and wife are not a family. Servants are not a family.

I shall then illustrate the following proposition: *When the Apostles say they baptized an* OIKOS *a* FAMILY *or* HOUSE, *they use a term as expressive of the presence of infants, if not more so than if they had actually said they baptized infants.* The term infant is not a definite term, and though it had been used, it would not have prevented controversy, it would have been as liable to objection as the term family, or house. An infant, according to our law, is a person below twenty-one years of age; a person nineteen is an infant. In this sense Baptists might be said to practise infant baptism, while they baptize only adults.—I mention this to shew the extreme difficulty of employing words that cannot be controverted when there is an unwillingness to be guided by their general import.

Now for the proof—Acts xvi. 15. "And when she (Lydia) was baptized, and her household," that is her house, her family, or children.

1 Tim. iii. 4. "One that ruleth well his own house, (family) having his children in subjection with all gravity." The latter clause of the verse explains the former; his

* "A man's *house* (oikos) most properly means his children, his offspring, his decendants, and is generally used to denote these even exclusively."—DR. WARDLAW.

children were his family, or house, and by having his children in subjection with all gravity, he would rule well his own family, or house.

1 Tim. v. 14. "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house." Here is, first, marriage; secondly, child-bearing. When children are born, then there is a house, or family; and thirdly, the guiding of the house, or children, thus born. Here the term house means children, infants, as soon as they are born: it is then the mother's care begins.

Psal. lxviii. 6. "God setteth the solitary in families," (*Heb. and margin, in a house*). That is, he setteth the solitary man, the person who dwelt alone, in a house: he makes him the father of children. House, here, must mean children, infants.

Psal. cxiii. 9. "He maketh the barren women to keep house, and to be the joyful mother of children." The woman had no house while she had no children; she is made to keep house by being made the joyful mother of children, and if this does not express the presence of infants, I know not what can. The first infant that she should bear, would be her house.

In the following passage, house means an infant before it was born; Ruth iv. 11, 12. "And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house, like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel. And let thy house be like the house of Pahrez, (whom Tamer bare to Judah,) of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman." THY HOUSE which the Lord shall give thee OF THIS YOUNG WOMAN; what can this mean? It can mean nothing else than an infant to be born of her. So soon as she should bear her first child, Boaz would have a house of her. House, here, then must mean infant, and only infant.

But this example is equal to a hundred, Let it be distinctly observed, that the language here used is not the language of an individual, but *of all the people that were in the gate, and the elders.* We wish it not to be forgot that it was the current language of Judea, the language of the rulers, and the people at large, to call an infant in prospect, a child to be born, a house, and surely when born, to give it the same name.—what a wonderful change must have taken place, if a term so expressive of the presence of children, came in the Apostles' days to express their absence, their cutting of, and exclusion!

But this is not the only evidence that the passage affords of what we contend for. We have yet the expressions, *like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel.* The builders here are females, and how did they build the house of Israel? Was it by bringing adults into it, or was it by child-bearing, by bringing infants into it? How stood the fact, the historical fact of the case? He who denies that it was by child-bearing that Rachel and Leah built the house of Israel, denies a matter of plain, historical fact. And since the house of Israel was built by having infants born into it, then, surely the term house, must mean children, infants. Let a person try if he possibly can exclude the idea of child-bearing, of infants being born into a house, or family, is said to be built. Here, then, we have evidence the most satisfactory,—evidence to which no reflecting person can object; we have demonstration, that the term house is expressive of the presence of infants.

We contend that the term build, in connexion with house is decisive on the subject; it settles the point; it precludes controversy, as it irresistibly confines our minds to the idea of children, or infants.

Gen. xvi. 2. "And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing; I pray

thee, go in unto my maid ; it may be that I obtain children by her." The Hebrew has it, *that I may be built up by her*. We hence learn the reason why a family is termed a house, namely, because it is built up of children. Infants are the stones of it.

Gen. xxx. 3. "And she (Rachel) said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her ; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her." Here too the Hebrew has it, *that I may also be built up by her*. This verse leads us to the same conclusion as the former. In the minds of the ancient people of God, the ideas of a house and children, or infants, were inseparable.

Duet. xxv. 9. "So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house." The case stood thus : the surviving brother was to take his deceased brother's widow and raise up seed to his brother, and if he did not take the widow, a punishment was to be inflicted on him ; but in taking her, and having children by her, he was said to build up his brother's house. The house then must be the children thus born.—The Apostles wrote the language of the Old Testament, that is, they attached to the terms they used that sense which they had in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Having ascertained, then, from these passage, and they are only a specimen, that *oikos*, house, in its general, literal, obvious, and natural, import means family, children, or infants, we are now prepared to say who the Apostles baptized, when they say they baptized the household, *oikos*, house, or family, of Lydia, of the Jailor, of Stephanas, &c., namely, that they baptized their children or infants. Can we suppose that they would have employed a term so well understood by their readers, to express the presence of infants, if they meant to exclude them? He may believe it who can. On this supposition, we must believe that they said one thing and meant

another, and we must despair of ever being able to affix definite ideas to any word employed by them. For my part, I understand the Apostles according to their plain, simple meaning; and believing them to have said that they baptized infants, I practise the same, and look on those who oppose it as opposing what the Scriptures teach.

No Baptist has ever yet given a satisfactory answer to the question, Whom did the Apostles baptize when they say they baptized houses? and we may despair of ever seeing a solution of it from them.

The way in which the baptism of Lydia's family is introduced, is worthy of notice. It is related without any intimation that the case was an uncommon one: it comes in as a matter of course, as if it had been an understood thing, that the family was baptized along with the parent. It was no new thing, but the following out of an established practice; and it may be noticed that what was done in one case would be done in all similar cases, that is, since the family of Lydia was baptized on the faith of their parent, the same would be done in all cases in which parents, having a family, believed. The account of Lydia, the Jailor, Stephanas, &c., is only a specimen of a general practice. Suppose then, that among the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, there were three hundred persons having families, or let the reader take any other reasonable proportion he pleases. Here, then, are three hundred baptized families, yet, there is not in all these families a single infant, not a single young child! This is not believable. It would be contrary to matter of fact to suppose it. There is a moral certainty that there must have been infants in them. Let a person take three hundred, or, if he pleases, one hundred, or fifty families at random from any country, or town, or street, and let him say beforehand, in these fifty families there will not

be a single young child, and he will find himself very wide from the fact.—I mention this only as a confirmation of the direct argument drawn from the meaning of the term house, as expressive of children, infants.

The Baptist system carries something in its very face which may serve as a confutation of it. In reading the history of the Acts of the Apostles, we meet with the baptism of the parent, and his, or her house, or family, or children. In perusing the account of Baptist Missions, we read indeed of the Baptism of the adult, the parent, but we have no house, no family, no children. Here then is a defect.. There is the want of the Apostolic house, and there is nothing as a substitute for it. But in the history of Pædobaptist Missions, we met with the baptism, not only of the parent, but also with the baptism of his, or her children. Here, then, if we have not to the very thing, the house, with which we meet in the Acts, we have a substitute for it, something very like it, but to me it appears to be the very thing. There is merely a change of the name, the term child, or children, being substituted for the more ancient one of *oikos*, house, or family. *Therefore* I conclude that Pædobaptists are nearest to Apostolic example.

Another conclusive argument in favour of infant baptism might be drawn from the fact, that young children were found in the Apostolic churches, Eph. vi. 1–4; and a third from the Abrahamic covenant, in which a connection is recognised between parent and child never yet abrogated; but I have limited myself to one argument: and as to the mode, it has been satisfactorily shewn, that there is not a command to baptize by immersion, nor an example of baptism by immersion, recorded in the whole New Testament, but that *pouring* was the Apostolic mode: See *Facts and Evidences on the subject of Baptism by the Editor of Calmet's Dictionary;* a work that I

would recommend to all who have any doubts on the subject of Baptism : also Mr. Ewing's late Essay on the subject.

All controversy among Christians should have the tendency of bringing them together, but this can only be done by a firm exhibition of the truth. If my argument is valid, as I believe it is, then Baptists must be in error, and it is never too late to acknowledge, or to renounce that in which we have been mistaken ; and if my single argument should have the effect of hindering any from rashly embracing that which appears to me unsanctioned by the word of God, or if it should lead any who have embraced Baptist sentiments, to a train of thought that will ultimately bring them to see that their principles are untenable, I shall not consider myself as having written in vain.

TORONTO : LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS.

# A WORD ABOUT

# Infant Baptism.

The writer of this Tract, believing that it can be distinctly shown that the baptism of the infants of believers is authorized by the word of God, begs the candid and prayerful attention of the people of God to the observations which follow:

One preliminary remark is necessary regarding the mode of proof adopted. Many of the opponents of infant baptism are accustomed to denounce all attempts to establish the propriety of the practice by inferential reasoning. They tell us that this is a subject on which such reasoning is inadmissible, and that nothing can justify the practice but a *direct* and *positive* announcement of the will of the great Head of the Church. To this I reply, that if we are sure it is truth we have ascertained, it matters not, so far as the certainty of it is concerned, in what manner we have ascertained it. All ascertained truth is equally certain. A truth arrived at by inference cannot be *less true* than a truth communicated by direct announcement. The only question is, "What is truth?"

Besides, it is only by inferential reasoning that we can prove the existence of God—the authenticity of the Scriptures—the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath—and many other doctrines "most surely believed among us." If inferential reasoning is allowed in reference to such subjects as these, what good reason can there be for declaring it inadmissible in regard to the subject of baptism? Are we to prescribe to God the manner in which He shall make known His will on this particular topic; or ought we not rather to receive with child-like docility, every intimation of His will, in whatever manner communicated?

That infant baptism is according to the mind of God is proved by the three following considerations:—

I. The church of God, though it has subsisted under various forms of administration, has been substantially the same since its original institution. When "the law was given by Moses," the patriarchal church was not dissolved and another set up in its place; the one church continued, with this difference, that the gracious principles of the Divine administration were more fully developed than they had before been. And when "the grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," the Jewish church was not dissolved, and another set up in its place;—the one church still continued, with a still fuller development of the principles of the Divine administration, along with the expulsion of those who had been unfaithful to the trust commited to them. This is manifest from the apostle's reasoning in Romans xi. 17: "If some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in amongst them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches." The church is represented as a tree, but the tree was not rooted up, and another planted in its place,—some of the branches were broken off, and others were grafted in;—the tree itself remained the same.

Since the church of God is one and the same church, in all ages, and under all the different dispensations of God's grace, it follows, that when God, at any time establishes a general practice in the church, that practice must continue to be observed until God himself repeals the law which prescribed it. For example: He established the practice of animal sacrifice; and this continued to be observed till, by his inspired servants the apostles, He declared in the plainest terms that the one sacrifice of Christ had superseded all other sacrifices. Had no such declaration of his will been made, the offering of animal sacrifices would still have been obligatory, for, in the church of God, He only who has authority to bind has authority to loose.

Now, read attentively the 17th chapter of Genesis, from the beginning to the 14th verse, and when you have done so, observe, that the covenant here spoken of is not a new thing, revealed now for the first time. It is the same which had been revealed from the beginning, for you perceive He does not call it simply *a covenant*, but emphatically and definitely "MY COVENANT," by which name it had been known to the fathers long before the time of Abram, (see Gen. vi. 18, and ix. 9-17.) It is the announcement of God's gracious plan of mercy to fallen man through a mediator, and it forms the basis of the church of God in all ages. It has not been disannulled by the law, called otherwise the Sinaitic covenant, or Mosaic dispensation, (see Galatians iii. 13-21,) but continues still to exist as "the New Covenant," in distinction from that made at Sinai, which has become old and vanished away. For this reason it is called also "the Everlasting Covenant," that made at Sinai having been but temporary.

The minds of many persons are much perplexed respecting this covenant. Finding that it is most frequently spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures, they suppose that it must be part of the Old Testament dispensation, in distinction from the New; that is, according to their notions of things, of the Mosaic dispensation in distinction from the Christian dispensation. But it is not strictly correct to identify the Old Testamant dispensation and the Mosaic dispensation, as if they were one and the same. The Mosaic, indeed, was *an* Old Testament dispensation, but it was not *the* Old Testament dispensation. Properly speaking, the Old Testament dispensation was the same in its essential elements with the New, for it was the dispensation of the *Everlasting Covenant*, which the apostle, in Galatians iii. 17, declares "was confirmed of God in Christ;"—the dispensation of the "*Promise*," as he otherwise terms it in the 18th and subsequent verses. It was in virtue of this "covenant," or "Promise," that the inheritance came to Abraham,

(verse 18th)—the same inheritance which is given to all who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, for *the blessing of Abraham* comes upon the Gentiles, (verse 14th.) Now, to any one who attentively reads from the 13th to the 18th verse of this same 3rd chapter of Galatians, it must be evident, that the dispensation of God's grace to us Gentiles, in New Testament Times is the same as it was to Abraham, and other believers, in Old Testament times, —in other words, that "the blessing of Abraham" comes upon us, as it came upon him, through the "covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ;" and which "the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul."

If it is asked, What, then, do you make of the Mosaic dispensation? I answer: The apostle shows that it was an arrangement quite distinct from the great dispensation of the Covenant, though it did not at all hinder, but rather facilitate the working out of that greater dispensation. It came in (if I may be allowed the expression,) as a parenthesis; it was introduced into the midst of the Covenant dispensation as a subordinate arrangement, intended for a special purpose, and when it had served that purpose it passed away, leaving the dispensation of the Everlasting Covenant still in force. And if it is asked, What was the purpose for which it was thus introduced? the apostle replies, "It was added, (literally "*superadded*,") because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made," that is, to show those who were under it what things were displeasing to God, and to convince them of their sinfulness, and consequent liability to the Divine displeasure, that thus they might be led to despair of saving themselves by any righteousness of their own, and be constrained to look for salvation to the promise of the Everlasting Covenant.

It is not correct, therefore, to speak of the Old Testament dispensation and the Mosaic dispensation as if they were the same. The one was but an appendage to the other. The Old Testament dispensation commenced with

the first gospel promise, given to man immediately after he had sinned;—the Mosaic dispensation commenced at the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, about 2500 years afterwards. The Old Testament dispensation was for the race of man;—the Mosaic dispensation was for the nation of Israel. The Old Testament dispensation has merged into the New, both being the administration of the same Covenant;—the Mosaic dispensation has been entirely and for ever abolished. In going back, therefore, to the Covenant which God established with Abraham, we are not going back to Judaism, but to that which, having existed before Judaism was, continues to exist now that Judaism is not.

To this view of the Covenant it has been objected, that, as established with Abraham, it contained promises of temporal blessings as well as spiritual, and was therefore, partly at least, of a carnal and temporary nature. But the objector forgets that the "New Covenant" includes temporal blessings still. Every blessing which God's people enjoy comes to them through this Covenant. All we have is through Christ, "in whom" this Covenant "was confirmed,"—the bread which supports the perishing body, as truly as the grace which saves the imperishable soul.

I have, perhaps, dwelt too long on this branch of the subject; but it is so ill understood by the many, that it seemed necessary to enlarge upon it, even at the risk of appearing tedious to the few. I return to the passage from Genesis, quoted above.

When God revealed this His everlasting Covenant to Abram, He established by law this practice, that the infant seed of a believing parent were, along with himself, to receive the mark of the Covenant, and thus be recognised as sustaining a certain relation to the church of God —not in virtue of their own faith, for they were incapable of believing, but in virtue of the faith of their parent. In other words, we find in this chapter a divinely instituted connection between a believer and his infant children, whereby, when the parent professed his faith in God's

Covenant, and was received into the church, his infant children were so carried along with him that they received the *same mark of the covenant*;—call it a mark of initiation, or whatever else you choose;—*the same mark* which he himself received. From the time of Abram this became the standing law of God's house. It was not peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation, having been established 430 years before that dispensation commenced. Now I ask, has this law ever been repealed? Has God ever declared, directly or indirectly, that it is His will that this practice should cease, and that "the children should *not* be as aforetime." (see Jeremiah xxx. 20.) If so, let the passage which contains such an intimation be pointed out, and there will be an end of the controversy. But no such intimation exists.

It is not necessary, in order to justify the practice of thus receiving the infant children in New Testament times, that their reception should be again commanded, as it was commanded in the case of Abram. *The former command remaining unrepealed, the practice continues as a matter of course.* But if the practice were to have been discontinued—if the children were *not* to be as aforetime, it *was* necessary that there should have been a distinct and unambiguous intimation of the change.

It is no reply to this argument to say that "baptism has not come in the place of circumcision." I do not affirm that it has, although, if I did, it might not be difficult to prove the truth of the affirmation. My argument, however, requires it not. What I affirm is, (and I repeat it again that it may be distinctly understood,) that God established in his church *this* constitution of things, that when a parent was received into the church on a profession of his faith, his infant children had administered to them the same rite which he himself had, and by which he was recognized as belonging to the number of God's professing people. This divine law has never been repealed, consequently we are bound still to treat in the same way the infant children of church members, that is,

to administer to them the same rite by which adults are originally recognised as belonging to the number of God's professing people. That rite, under the New Testament dispensation, is baptism, and it follows that the infant children of believers are to be baptized.

II. So far from there being any trace in the New Testament of this connection between believing parents and their infant children being abolished, there are evident traces of its being continued.

*First* of all, there is the fact, that with the apostles of our Lord it was a common practice, when the head of a household believed, to baptize himself and his household. And notwithstanding all the attempts that have been made, it has never yet been proved, that the households mentioned in the narrative did not, like other households, contain infant children. Till this is proved, we have a right to assume that they did, and that household baptism was, in this respect, quite similar to household circumcision.

But such proof has been attempted. Let us look at it.

From Acts xvi. 34, it is said, that all the jailor's household must have been adults, for they all rejoiced and believed in God. It is not strange that a mere English reader should make such an assertion, but it *is* strange that those who know the language in which the inspired narrative was written should do so. Let any one who knows even the elements of the Greek language look at the passage, and he cannot fail to perceive that there is no proof whatever in the words used by the inspired writer, that the jailor's household believed. My limits do not admit of my entering the field of criticism; I must content myself with the above assertion, which indeed is sufficient to meet the assertion on the other side. Where no proof is adduced on the one side, no counter-proof is required on the other.

With regard to the household of Lydia, it is said, they must all have been adults, for they are spoken of in Chapter xvi. 40, as "brethren," whom Paul and Silas com-

forted. But in the first place, even though we should grant that this meeting of "the brethren" took place in Lydia's house, it by no means follows that these brethren were of the household of Lydia. And secondly, it is not even said in the narrative that the meeting took place in Lydia's house at all. Four things are affirmed in the verse in question:—1st. That the apostles went out of the prison. 2d. That they entered into the house of Lydia. 3d. That when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them. 4th. That then they departed. I ask any candid man, who understands what sound reasoning is, whether he can possibly deduce from these four facts, the conclusion, that the brethren spoken of were the members of Lydia's household.

*Secondly.*—Observe the manner in which the apostle Peter addresses the Jews on the day of Pentecost, in Acts ii. 38, 39; "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Gost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." That the promise here referred to is the promise made to Abraham—the promise of the everlasting covenant, is evident, for it is "the blessing of Abraham" that is said to "come on" those who "receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," (Gal. iii. 14.) Now, saith the Apostle, "this promise is *to you*," that is, to the adult Jews whom he addressed, therefore "repent," turn to God, believing the record concerning his Son, that ye may receive the blessing promised; and, as the mark or token of your doing so, "be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Mark the explicitness of the language, "Repent and be baptized,.....FOR the promise is *unto you*." But the promise was not to them only; it was, as the Apostle adds, *to their children also*, according to its original tenor, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." Formerly, when adult proselytes were admitted to the privileges of the church of God, they were circum-

cised, or marked with the token of the covenant, *because the (covenant) promise was to them*; and their children also were circumcised, *because the promise was to their children*. And now, when Peter exhorts them to *be baptized*, because the promise was *to them*, and adds, that the promise was to their children also, must they not necessarily have understood him as meaning, that their children, having still the same connection with them as they formerly had, in relation to the covenant itself, were still to have the same connection with them in relation also to the token of the covenant;—that as they had been included in the *circumcision*, because included in the promise, even so they were to be included in the *baptism* for the same reason? If the fact of the promise being to the parents was a good reason why *they* should be baptized, surely the fact of the same promise being to the children was a good a reason why *they* also should be baptized. And if the apostle did not mean so, why did he, in connection with baptism, introduce the children at all, and affirm respecting *them* the same thing which he had just affirmed respecting the parents, and which, in the case of the parents, he adduced as a reason for their being baptized!

But the apostle adds something more. Not only is the promise to the Jews and to their children, it is also "to all that are afar off," (*i. e.* the Gentiles,) "even as many as the Lord our God shall call." All Gentiles who are called of God are, equally with the Jews, partakers of the promise; and as they receive all the privileges of the gospel as fully as the Jews did, (for "in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek,") it follows, that the promise is *to their children* also, and that the same connection subsists between a believing Gentile parent and his children now, as subsisted of old between a believing Jew and his children.

*Thirdly.*—In 1 Cor. vii. 14, the apostle, after enjoining the believing husband or wife not to leave the unbelieving wife or husband, adds, as a reason, "For the unbelieving

husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." Whatever the terms may mean, the fact is here plainly brought out, that in consequence of even one of the parents being a believer, the children are holy, not unclean; and that if neither of the parents is a believer, the children are unclean, not holy. Here is a broad distinction declared between the children of believing and the children of unbelieving parents, a distinction founded entirely on the religious state of the parent, and in no way arising out of anything personal to the children. The general idea conveyed by the term "holy" is that of "separation," and this general idea is perceptible in all the different modifications of meaning with which the term is used. Without professing to determine the precise sense in which the term is here employed by the apostle, I beg the reader seriously and candidly to weigh all the different interpretations of the passage which he has met with, and then, without partiality or prejudice, to say whether any one of them is at the same time natural, probable, consistent with the context, and in accordance with the general usage of scripture language, except that which considers the passage a plain indication of that scriptural connection between a believing parent and his seed, of which I have spoken above, and consequently, as an argument, indirect but strong, in favour of infant baptism.

I shall mention only one of the many other interpretations which have been given of the passage. It has been supposed that the term "holy" is here used to signify "legitimate." If so, the correlative term "unclean" must signify "illegitimate." According to this interpretation, the apostle declares, that in consequence of one of the parties being a believer, the children are legitimate. It follows, that if neither of the parties is a believer, the children are illegitimate. Is it so, then, that the children of all unbelievers are illegitimate? It must be so, according to the interpretation in question; but surely the

mere statement of such a question is a sufficient refutation of that interpretation.

These are some of the traces which are to be found in the New Testament of the continuance of that spiritual connection which of old subsisted between a believing parent and his seed. There are others which might have been adduced and illustrated, had my limits permitted. But looking only to those which have been adduced, I confess it seems to me impossible to explain them in any consistent or rational manner, except on the supposition that infant baptism was practised in the apostolic age.

III. My third argument in proof of infant baptism, is the historical. And here let me not be misunderstood. I do not allege that because infant baptism was practised in the early ages of the church, therefore it must of necessity be right, knowing as I do, that, in reference to many subjects, those who are called "the Fathers of the church," made void the word of God by their tradition. My only object in referring to these Fathers, is, to show that infant baptism, instead of being "a modern innovation," was universally practised in the churches very shortly after the time of the apostles, and continued to be so for centuries, without the propriety of it being called in question. I cite the Fathers, not that they may give their *judgment regarding a doctrine*—for their judgment on doctrinal subjects I estimate somewhat lightly—but that they may give their *testimony regarding a fact*,—a fact concerning which they could not themselves be mistaken, and concerning which they could not give false evidence without being at once detected and exposed. As to the correctness of the inference which I may deduce from that fact, the reader must judge for himself.

*Justin Martyr*, who was born before the year 100, says, "There are many men and women of sixty or seventy years, who, *from children*, were made disciples to Christ, who remain uncorrupt, and I glory that I can show such from every nation."* The period at which these

* Apolog. prim.

"Children" were "made disciples," must have been during the life of some of the apostles, or at least immediately after the death of the last of them.

*Irenæus*, born about the year 97, says of Christ, "For he came to save all by himself; all, I say, who by him are regenerated to God, *infants*, and *little children*, and boys, and young men, and elder persons."* The word translated "regenerated," is constantly employed by the Fathers to signify "baptized." Irenæus elsewhere clearly shows, that this is the sense in which he uses it; so that the passage contains a direct testimony, that in his time, *i. e.* immediately after the apostolic age, it was the common practice to baptise the "infants and little children," as well as the "young men and elder persons."

*Tertullian*, born about the year 160, exhorts parents to delay the baptism of their children, on the superstitious ground that sins committed after baptism were unpardonable.† In so doing, he shows very plainly that infant baptism was then the general practice.

*Origen*, born about the year 184, says, "Infants are baptized agreeably to the usage of the church."§ And again, "The church has received from the apostles a tradition to give baptism to little children also."‡ It follows that in Origen's time, infant baptism was the general practice.

*Cyprian*, who lived at the same time with Origen, informs us, that at the Council of Carthage, sixty-six Bishops were assembled to determine whether baptism might be administered before the eighth day after birth, and they unanimously agreed that it need not be delayed till the eighth day, but might be administered at any time.‖ The purpose for which I refer to this, is to show, that at this period, only 150 years after the time of the apostles, there was no dispute whatever respecting the propriety of infant baptism itself. All were agreed about

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* Cont. Haer., lib, ii. c. 39.
† De Bapt., c. 18.
§ In Rom. lib. v. c. 9.
‡ Homil. 8. in Levit., c. 12.
‖ Cyprian Ep. 59, ad Fidum.

that. The dispute regarded only the time of administering the rite.

*Augustine*, born in the year 354, says, "The whole church practises infant baptism; it was not instituted by councils, but was always in use."* And he declares that he did not remember ever to have met with any person, whether Catholic or heretic, who denied that infants are baptized for remission of sin.†

*Pelagius*, who lived at the same time with Augustine, declares that he had never heard even any impious heretic who asserted that infants are not to be baptized.‡ Had the propriety of infant baptism been disputed in his time, he could not have been ignorant of the fact, for he was born in Britain, and travelled through France, Italy, Africa Proper, and Egypt, to Jerusalem.

I repeat, that I do not cite the Fathers to give judgment on a point of doctrine. I cite them only to give evidence on a point of fact. And from their testimony, the truth of which cannot be impugned, it appears, that in the age immediately following that of the apostles, infant baptism was the common undisputed practice of the Christian church, and continued to be so for several centuries. Had this fact not been notorious, these Fathers could not have written as they did, without being at once detected and exposed. Now, let us suppose for a moment, that infant baptism was *not* practised by the apostles,—that it was a human invention, introduced into the church their after time. The question occurs,—and it is a question to which I beg the reader's special attention:—*Is it possible that it could have become all at once the universal practice, without even one solitary individual lifting up his voice against the innovation?* Could the most eminent Christian Bishops have declared to the world that it had existed from the days of the apostles—that it had never been disputed by any—when it must have been notorious, both to

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* De Baptismo, Contra Donatistas, lib. iv.

† Wall's History of Infant Baptism, Part I., chap. 19. § 17.

‡ Augustin, de peccato originali, c. 17.

them, and to every one else who attended to the subject, that it had sprung up in that very age? We put it to any man of sound and candid mind, *Can you believe this?* If not, you must believe that infant baptism was practised by the apostles of our Lord, and is therefore of Divine and permanent obligation. There is no alternative between the two opinions.

Take the following case by way of illustration. Suppose some eminent and godly man of our own day, such a man as Dr. Chalmers, for example, were to publish to the world that the Veto Act had been in existence and operation in the church of Scotland ever since the time of the Reformation from Popery; that it had originated with John Knox himself; and that its propriety had never been disputed by any one. Can any man believe that such a statement could be published without being at once marked with the brand of falsehood; or that it could go down to posterity, reiterated in various forms by other eminent and godly men in successive generations, and be found after the lapse of several centuries as an uncontradicted, undisputed statement? He who can believe this, is surely credulous enough; yet this is not a more improbable case than the other, on the supposition that infant baptism was a human invention, introduced after the apostolic age.

On these grounds, it is believed that infant baptism is according to the will of God. As much as possible, minute details have been avoided, as I have been desirous of keeping the reader's mind fixed on the prominent features of the case. May what has been written tend to the glory of God, and may the Lord the Spirit, lead all who believe in Christ to know in all things, what the will of the Lord is.

# APPENDIX.

## A FEW COMMON OBJECTIONS TO INFANT BAPTISM SHORTLY ANSWERED.

*Objection* 1st.—What good can it do to an *unconscious* infant to be baptised? *Answer.*—Why not as well ask, What good can it do an unconscious infant to be prayed for? If the unconsciousness is a valid ground of objection in the one case, it is equally so in the other.

*Objection* 2d.—Is it not said, "Repent and be baptized?" and does not this imply, that without repentance there ought not to be baptism? *Answer.*—It is also said, "He that believeth not shall be damned;" and, according to the argument of the objector, this would imply, that without faith there can be no salvation, and, consequently, that all who die in infancy are lost. In both cases the affirmation must be limited by the nature of the subject spoken of; and as the one passage decides nothing respecting infant salvation, so the other passage decides nothing respecting infant baptism.

*Objection* 3d.—The Saviour was baptized when he was thirty years of age, and we ought to follow his example, for he said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." *Answer.*—To fulfil all righteousness is to do all that God requires of us. But we must first ascertain that a practice is enjoined by God, before we can adduce this passage to prove that it ought to be observed, otherwise it is a mere begging of the question. The baptism of John, to which the Saviour submitted, and in reference to which he uttered the words quoted, was a Divine institution, and therefore it became the Saviour to honour it. But the baptism of John was not Christian baptism, for some who had been baptized by John were afterwards

baptized by the apostles in the name of Jesus. (Acts xix. 1-5.)*

Besides, proving the propriety of adult baptism does not disprove the propriety of infant baptism. All psedo-baptists hold, that adults who have not been previously baptized ought to be baptized on a profession of their faith, be they thirty, forty, or even eighty years of age. About this there is no dispute.

*Objection 4th.*—If infant baptism were scriptural, might we not expect to find it occupying a more prominent place in the records of the Acts of the Apostles than even the baptism of adults? *Answer.*—Let the objector consider, that in the Acts of the apostles we have an account only of the commencement of the work of evangelizing the nations, and in every country in which this work is in its commencement, the baptism of adults must be first in order, and must occupy the most prominent place in the record. It is so still in the accounts of the labours of our psedo-baptist Missionaries in foreign lands. An individual believes, and he is baptized, and (if he happens to be the head of a family,) his household. But do we ever find in the records of the Missionaries of our Baptist brethren any thing like the household baptisms of which we read in the inspired narrative? True, they point us to cases in which all the members of a family have been baptised simultaneously, on a profession of their faith; but that is altogether a different thing from the baptism of a household, along with its head, when the faith of the head only is mentioned.

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* See on this subject an admirable pamphlet by the late Robert Hall of Bristol, entitled, "The Essential Difference between Chrisian Baptism and the Baptism of John, more fully Stated and Confirmed."—*Works, vol, 3d, small edition.*

LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS, TORONTO.

# MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

## "THE SINNER'S FRIEND."

At a Public Meeting of the NORWICH CITY MISSION one of the speakers gave the following deeply interesting narrative of the recovery of a wretched individual who appeared LOST, almost beyond hope.

In the town (Maidstone,) where I reside, (said the speaker, Mr. J. V. Hall,) were twelve young men who were accustomed, early in life, to meet together for *indulgence in drinking and all manner of excess*. In the course of time, some of them engaged in business; but their habits of sin were so entwined with their very existence, that they became bankrupts or insolvents. Eight of them *died under the age of forty, without a hope beyond the grave*; three others were reduced to the most abject poverty. Two of these had formerly moved in very respectable circles, but they are now in the most miserable state of poverty, wretchedness and disgrace.

"*One more*, the *last of the twelve*, the *worst of all*, remains to be accounted for. He was a sort of *ringleader*, taking the head of the table at convivial parties, and *sitting up whole nights, drinking* and inducing others to do the same. He was an *infidel*, a *blasphemer*, a *despiser of the word of God*; yet a good-natured man, and would do anybody a kindness. At length he left the town, and went to reside at a distance, where, for a time, he refrained from dissipation, was married, and every thing seemed prosperous around him; but instead of being thankful to God for his mercy, and watching against his besetting sin, he gave way to his old propensity, and brought misery to his family and friends.

"*One dark night*, being in the neighbourhood of Stourbridge, he had been *drinking to excess*, and in a state of *intoxication* he wandered out of the house, and staggered *amongst the coal pits*, which are in many places left open and exposed. These he passed in safety; but the road he took *went over a canal*; he *missed the bridge*, and *rolled over the bank* to the edge of the water. And here he seemed to have *arrived at the end of his wicked course*; but God, who is rich in mercy, had *caused a stone to lie directly in his path*, and thus spared him in this the apparently last hour of his mortal existence; *one turn more*,

and he would have sunk into eternal ruin, and his disembodied spirit been ushered into the presence of the Judge of all. The arm of mercy, however, interposed; his senses returned for a moment; he saw the water beneath him, he crawled back again into the road; there he was *picked up and lodged in a public house for the night.*

"This miraculous escape, it might have been thought would have made a deep and lasting impression upon his mind; but no—it was viewed simply as a lucky escape, and he continued to pursue his career of sin as ardently as before! After an indulgence in drinking for some days, having come to his senses, he began to reason with himself upon his guilt and folly, surrounded with blessings yet abusing the whole—and in an angry, passionate manner, he muttered, 'Oh! it's no use for me to repent; my sins are too great to be forgiven.' He had no sooner uttered these words than a voice seemed to say, with strong emphasis, '*If thou wilt forsake thy sins, they shall be forgiven.*' The poor man started at what he believed to be a real sound, and hastily turned round, but seeing no one, he said to himself, 'Surely I have been drinking till I am going mad.' He stood paralysed, not knowing what to think, till relieved by a flood of tears, and then exclaimed, 'Surely, this is the voice of mercy once more calling me to repentance.' He fell on his knees, and half suffocated by his feelings, cried out, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' The poor wretch was broken-hearted; and now his besetting sin appeared more horrible than ever; but it must be conquered, or he must perish. *Then commenced a contest more terrible than that of conflicting armies*;—the soul was at stake;—an impetuous torrent was to be turned into an opposite course. He now began to search the Bible, which he had once despised. Here he saw that crimson and scarlet sins could be blotted out and made white as snow; that the grace of God was all sufficient. He refrained from intemperance, commenced family prayer, and hope again revived, but his deadly foe still pursued him, and he was again overcome.

"Now his disgrace and sinfulness appeared worse than ever, and with melancholy feeling he cried out, in anguish of spirit, that he was *doomed to eternal misery*, and it was useless to try to avert his fate. His cruel enemy took this opportunity to suggest to his mind that he had so disgraced himself that it would be better to get rid of his life at once, (frequently the end of drunkards.) The razor was in his hand—but the Spirit of the Lord interposed and the weapon fell to the ground. Still his enemy

pursued him, and seemed to have new power over his sin of intemperance. He would sometimes refrain for days and weeks, and then again he was as bad as ever. Hope seemed now to be lost, and especially when, one day, after having been brought into great weakness, through intemperance, death appeared to be very near, and his awful state more terrific than ever. Not a moment was to be lost; he cast himself once more at the footstool of his long-insulted Creator, and with an intensity of agony cried out, 'What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be thou my helper.' He sank down exhausted; he could say no more. *That prayer was heard*, and a voice from heaven seemed to reply, '*I will help thee*, I have seen thy struggles, and I will now say to thine enemy, Hitherto thou hast come, but *no further*.'

"A physician was consulted as to the probability, or possibility, of medicine being rendered effectual to stop the disposition to intemperance. *The poor man would have suffered the amputation of all his limbs*, could so severe a method have rid him of his deadly habit, which, like a vulture, had fastened upon his very vitals. The physician boldly declared, that if this poor slave would strictly adhere to his prescription, not only the practice, but the very inclination for strong drink would subside in a few months. Oh, *could you have seen the countenance of that poor man* when the physician told him of this: hope and fear alternately rising up, whilst he grasped the physician's arm and said, 'Oh, Sir, be careful how you open that door of hope, for should it be closed upon me, I am lost for ever!' The physician pledged his credit, that if his prescription was punctually followed, the happiest results would ensue. The remedy was a preparation of steel and eagerly did the poor slave begin to devour the antidote to his misery. *Every bottle was taken with an earnest prayer to God for his blessing* to accompany it. He commenced taking this medicine on the first week in March, 1816, and continued till the latter end of September following; and to the honour and glory of the Lord God Almighty, who sent his angel to whisper in the poor man's ear, 'I will help thee,' for the glory of God be it spoken, that from the latter end of Sept. 1816, to the present hour, (upwards *of twenty-three years,) not so much as a spoonful of spirituous*

*liquor, or wine of any description, has ever passed the surface of that man's tongue.*"

The speaker concluded by saying, "The narrative which I have thus detailed might appear almost as a fable, a tale, got up for effect, but every syllable is *truth*; and, to the glory and honour of the Lord God Almighty, the man who has been so marvellously delivered is now in perfect health, the happy servant of the Lord Jesus Christ; and he who has been plucked as a brand from the burning, and delivered from the power of Satan, *now stands before you*, and it is from HIS lips that you have heard the goodness of that God, whose mercy endureth for EVER!!!"

The life once dedicated to the indulgence of depraved appetites, is now spent in seeking to further the glory of God, and the temporal and eternal welfare of man. The individual has written a little work, '*The Sinner's Friend*,' of which upwards of HALF A MILLION copies have been put into circulation, the design of which is to call sinners to repentance; and while he adores that unmerited grace which pitied him in his low and lost estate, he seeks to warn his fellow sinners to flee from the wrath to come; and, in this, the day of grace and merciful visitation, to turn to that God who will have mercy upon them; and notwithstanding their manifold transgressions will, through the merits of the Lord Jesus, "abundantly pardon."

In the foregoing extraordinary case, the Lord has not only raised up this man as a monument of everlasting love, but has also mercifully verified the truth of his own word,—"He shall tread upon the lion and adder, (besetting sins.) He shall *call* upon ME, and I will answer him. I will be with him in *trouble*; I will *deliver* him, and *honour* him; with *long life** will I satisfy him, and show him *my salvation*.

All these blessings has the Lord poured out upon this individual, in full confirmation also of the Redeemer's words, "He that cometh to ME, I will IN NO WISE cast out." No; not though his sins had overtopped the highest mountains,—for "The blood of CHRIST cleanseth from ALL sin."

Come then, Sinner;—fear not;—come to CHRIST, and He will save YOU.

* Now (Dec. 1851) in his 78th year, full of life, health, and fire—holy fire—Christ Jesus ever in his heart, a million times *welcome* guest.

LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS, TORONTO.

# YOU ARE IMMORTAL!

BY B. NORTH, ESQ.

READER!—You are an immortal being! You have been born, and you will die, but you can never cease to exist! You *must* live forever! It is of no avail that you are so debased by sin that you may wish to be at death, like the brutes that perish. *You can not.* You have a certain time appointed for you to live here, and *then* you *must go* to appear before God, and have it decided whether you are to spend eternity in the enjoyment of heaven with God and Christ—the angels and the redeemed from among men, or with the worm that dieth not, and in the fire that never shall be quenched.

Now I wish you to consider that this is quite *true—true of yourself;* as true as that you are now living, that the day will come when you will be standing face to face with Jesus Christ—that the day will come when you will be in heaven or hell! Just think about this for a few moments before you read further. It is for your own good I ask you.

I will tell you another thing that is true. You are, by nature, in the power of an evil spirit, that does not want you to consider these things, and whose object is to destroy you eternally. Do you doubt this? Stop a moment and think. You will acknowledge that you have a spirit in you that prompts your thoughts, your words, your deeds; that advises you to one course of action, and against another; that fills you with desire after one mode of life, and a dislike to another.

You have hitherto followed the suggestions of this spirit within you—in other words, the leadings of your own natural heart. And whither has it led you? Has it not been *away from God?* Has it not kept you from making any preparation for eternity, and from laying up any treasure in heaven? Has it not opposed solitary study of the Bible, and private prayer and communion with God? If you ever have any good thoughts arise in you, has not this spirit kept putting this thing after that in your mind, until these thoughts have been got away; even now, is not the carnal mind fighting against the truths you are reading; or suggesting that, in your case, it is impossible for *you* to act upon the thoughts to which they give rise? And has it not led you so hitherto, that if you were to die at this moment, the having followed the promptings of this evil spirit would prove your everlasting destruction?

Oh! dear friend, consider, I beseech you, if the two things I have stated are facts, what is your present position? First, you are immortal; and, secondly, you are in the power of an evil spirit, who, unless you are rescued out of his power, will land you in an immortality of of misery. And these two things are true; but one of the evil spirit's acts is to blind you, so that you can not *see* it; another, to deaden you, so that you can not *feel* it. Day by day is he drawing you nearer and nearer the brink of the precipice, over which, if you once fall, hope is gone forever; and who can say, that before night, you may not be over? If you go on as you are, the day *will* come, the night of which will see you in hellfire. And what if this should be the day? You can not, with safety, go one step further down the broad road in which you have hitherto walked. Even now, the voice of God is calling to you, with urgency, "*Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?*" and if you refuse, it may be the last

call. For provoking him by your persistence in walking in "the way of death," and forgetting his oft-repeated invitations of love, he may swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest.

But now he is indeed calling on you. The very fact that you are alive and reading, instead of being among the multitude who are lifting up their eyes in torments, proves that he is still waiting to be gracious *to you*; and if you *will turn now, this moment*, forsaking every sin at once, and will call upon the name of the Lord, *you shall be saved.*

*Grasp the reality of the existence of the Saviour.* Be as sure that he exists *out of you*, and at the right hand of God—a living and almighty Saviour—as that the evil spirit exists *in you*, of which you can not but be conscious. Jesus Christ died for us that he might be able to save us; to save us not only from the guilt, the punishment, and pollution, but also *from the power of sin.* "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" (1 John v. 5.) Believe this, and laden with past sins as you are, accept boldly and without question, what God, in his wonderful love, has done for us, and call upon Jesus to save you, and you shall be saved. Do not dare to doubt that he hears you. Never mind what your heart says, you have followed that too long; believe the Word of God, and that says that *the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth; and that whoso cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out.* Ask him, then, for the pardon of all your sins, and for his Holy Spirit, and you have his word for it, that you shall have both, if you believe in him; and the evidence that you do, will be that when the Holy Spirit, for whom you pray, opposes your old enemy, the evil spirit, and says, "This is the way, walk ye in it,"

you follow the promptings and teachings of the new Spirit, and resist those of the old.

And, oh! dear friend, in this conflict, remember, that though the new Spirit may, and *will* lead you by a flesh-crucifying and self-mortifying path, yet, that he the Lord from heaven, came, out of pure love to your soul, to save you; and that while Satan is tempting you with, "This will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me," God is crying within you, "Take up your cross and follow me" to glory. Oh! if you follow him from this day whithersoever he leadeth, do you think you will be sorry in the hour of death and the day of judgment? Ah! no. You will not; but, on the contrary, you "will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." But if you refuse to do so, there will come a day when you will wish you had never read these pages—which may God the Holy Spirit bless to your soul, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

O where shall rest be found,
Rest for the weary soul?
'Twere vain the ocean-depths to sound,
Or pierce to either pole:
The world can never give
The bliss for which we sigh;
'Tis not the *whole* of life to live,
Nor *all* of death to die.

Beyond this vale of tears,
There is a life above,
Unmeasured by the flight of years;
And all that life is love:—
There is a death, whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath;
O what eternal horrors hang
Around "the second death!"

LORD God of truth and grace,
Teach us that death to shun,
Lest we be banish'd from Thy face,
And evermore undone:
Here would we end our quest;
Alone are found in Thee,
The life of perfect love,—the rest
Of immortality.

LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS, TORONTO.

THE

# Constitution and Administration

OF THE

# KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

BY GEORGE ROBERTSON,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, THURSO.

"They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom."

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded."

EDINBURGH:

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# INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

During the last forty years, a variety of useful tracts have been published on the nature and government of a Christian Church, referring chiefly, however, to disputed parts of the outworks, without treating so fully of the internal administration. The following is an humble attempt, in some measure, to supply what is wanting, done on a cheap plan in accommodation to the poverty of the times. The importance of such help, as an index to scripture law, will be obvious to all who know how essential the knowledge of principles is to the maintaining of the obedience, peace, and prosperity of a Church, as well as for promoting personal benefit, and for affording newly admitted members a view of their position, privileges, duties, and obligations, that they may sooner learn to "walk so as to please God," and be left without excuse in neglecting known duty. No minister can afford time to instruct each individually on this subject. Nor can he with propriety, in his pulpit ministrations, dwell on it so frequently and fully, as may be required for the instruction of every convert. A brief manual, for early instruction and after reference, seems best adapted for all relative purposes,—affording also, a great saving of time and labour. May the God of truth bless this one for promoting the good intended, and thus advance his cause and glory. Amen.

G. R.

THURSO, October 20, 1843.

# CONSTITUTION

OF THE

# KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

THE kingdom of Christ consists of Christ its King or Head, and the subjects of his grace, having privileges and laws from him for their supply and government, in the use of which they serve him for promoting his cause and glory. It is otherwise called the "church of Christ," and the "church of God," and is a "kingdom not of this world," as will appear from the following view of its King, subjects, laws, and administration.

1. As *Head of the church*, Christ is the eternal Jehovah, "God manifest in the flesh"—"God's only begotten and well-beloved Son,"—his fellow as well as servant,—and "loving righteousness and hating iniquity," and having "all power in heaven and in earth" for executing truth and righteousness, he is fully qualified for supreme and universal government.

Being found qualified, he was constituted Head of the Church by his Father, who set him at his own right hand, and gave him authority to execute judgment. John v. 27;—by right of purchase, by which he is "a Son over his own house." Heb. iii. 6;—and by right of conquest, by which all things are subject to him. Eph. i. 20–23. And being thus constituted, he is to the church the head source of spiritual life. John xiv. 19—Col. i. 18;—the fountain head of supply. Col. ii. 19;—the head bond of unity and influence. Eph. iv. 15, 16;—and the head of all government, authority, and power. Col. ii. 10.

It is evident from this view of headship relation, that

Christ is not the head *of* any church composed of a "mixed multitude," who have no spiritual relation to him. He is not the head of the dead, but of the living. Nor is he the head of those who do not obey him. It is plainly shewn, that those who are not governed by Bible rule are "not holding the head," Col. ii. 16—19.

Nor is Christ the Head of the nations, as he is the Head of the church. "He is the head *of* the body, the church," Col. i. 18, but "the head *over* all things to the church, which is his body." Eph. i. 22, 23. "The kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations," Psalm xxii. 28. "The kingdom" is his own peculiar purchased property, united to him, and living by faith in him, under his moral government; but the nations, as such, are the subjects *merely* of his providential government. The *church is extended* by the agents of his grace in the use of truth and persuasion, producing the obedience of an enlightened and willing people in things pertaining to God. The *nations are governed* by magistrates and others, as the agents of Providence, for controlling men by the power of the sword, so as to maintain the temporal rights and interests of mankind. By confounding those distinct provinces of Government, men have conjoined the agents of grace and of providence,—mixing things spiritual and temporal, so as to form that compound of corruption, called "the mystery of iniquity" and "the man of sin," which, in various forms, has long stood as the rival enemy of the kingdom of Christ. It is no doubt the duty of "every creature"—kings and subjects—to repent and believe the gospel, and obey Christ in all things. It is not, however, as members of the nation, but as members of the church, that Christians are required to promote the kingdom of Christ. The laws relating to the propagation of the gospel were given to the church, and not to the kings of the earth, who, ruling by the power of the sword, are unsuitable agents for pro-

moting a cause in which the use of the sword is forbidden. It is a remarkable fact, that, though rebuking sin in the ungodly, and commanding them to repent, Christ gave no instruction concerning christian duty to any but his disciples—a fact which plainly marks his spiritual headship as not extending beyond his chosen and faithful followers.

2. *The subjects of Christ's kingdom* are the subjects of his redeeming grace, as none else can hold the headship of Christ, and none else have a right to enter into that kingdom, or capacity to use and enjoy its privileges. The intrusion of false professors tends only to deceive their souls, to harden their hearts, to confirm their hypocrisy, and to increase their guilt,—and also to desecrate the christian ordinances, to render others partakers of their sins, to corrupt the church, to stumble the word, to hinder the work of God, and to dishonour the Saviour.

That which constitutes a true christian, is union and communion with Christ, formed and sustained by the belief and obedience of divine truth rendered effectual by the power of the Holy Spirit, John viii. 31, 32. 1st John ii. 24. Renewed principle is formed by receiving the revelation of the glorious person and sacrifice of Christ, which produces true conviction of sin, and affords a proper ground of justification and of hope, whereby the mind is also reconciled to God, regenerated, and placed under the delightful obligations of redeeming love, to serve and glorify God. And the same views and application of the cross of Christ by faith, are essential for sustaining the life of godliness during the whole process of sanctification, Heb. xii. 1, 2.

It has been a question with some, whether a true christian can be known. Some, whose christianity is rendered doubtful to themselves and others by neglecting the will of God, in consistency with their doubts as to their own state, naturally contend that a true christian cannot be known; and those who patronise impure communion,

are driven to seek support from the same opinion, misrepresenting those who think otherwise, by accusing them of assuming the divine prerogative of judging the heart, though such judge only according to the rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Yet these accusers do not hesitate, in other circumstances, to express their judgment of some as being true christians, and of others as being wanting in evidence of relation to Christ. It is required that believers of the truth should "discern between the righteous and the wicked,—between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not," Mal. iii. 18. Though no man's christianity can be known, as such, with absolute certainty to himself or to others, as known to God, it is easy to know by the views, temper, and conduct of many professors, that *they are not christians;* and that it is intended that consistent christians should be known as such to one another, and even to the world, is evident from the following texts:—John xiii. 35. 2nd Cor. iii. 2. 1st John ii. 5—iii. 18, 19—iv. 20—v. 13, 19, 20. A mutual recognition of christian character, is also an essential element in the social constitution, as otherwise it would be impossible to sustain the confidence of brotherly love, or to perform in faith and with a good conscience the peculiar duties of christian fellowship. Mat. vii. 6; 2nd Cor. vi. 14—18.

The scriptures teach that a true christian may be known by his open confession of the truth, John xii. 42, with Acts iv. 13;—by hearing Christ, John x. 27.; xviii. 37,—by likeness to Christ, 2nd Cor. iii. 2, 3;—by love to the brethren, John xiii. 35;—by self-denial in seeking to please God and bearing the cross for Christ's sake, Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33;—by separation from and disconformity to the world, John xv. 19; Acts ii. 40; Rom. xii. 1, 2;—and by obeying the laws of Christ in all things, Luke vi. 46—49; John xv. 14.

False professors are also known as wanting in the fore-

mentioned features and evidences of christian character; and in Mat. xxiii., they are marked by Christ as not acting according to their convictions of duty, verse 3;—as requiring of others what they will not themselves perform, v. 4;—as doing all their works to be seen of men, and recommending themselves by the ornaments of art, v. 5;—as seeking high places, ascendancy over others, and the honour which cometh from men, v. 6, 7;—as rejecting the spiritual peculiarities of the kingdom of Christ, and preventing others from entering into it, v. 13;—as making long prayers for a pretence, while practising oppression, v. 14;—as zealous in making proselytes to their own cause, without seeking to convert them to God, v. 15;—as labouring to justify their own faults by arguments not consistent with truth and reason, v. 16—22;—as showing great zeal about some favourite minor points for a cloak of religious appearance, while neglecting the weighter matters of the law, v. 23, 24; as making an outward show of purity without renewed principle and sanctification of heart, v. 25—28;—as professing great regard for the fathers and martyrs of the church, while acting on the same principles of persecution by which the prophets were slain, v. 29—32. In Mat. xv. 1—9, they are described as preferring the traditions and precepts of the fathers to the laws and authority of Christ. And in John xii. 42, they are spoken of as preferring the order and worship of the synagogue to those of the christian church. It should not be forgotten that "devout and honourable women" of this class, were the most active enemies of the apostles of Christ, Acts xiii. 50.

A careful comparison of these scripture marks of true and false professors, is necessary to forming a correct judgment of the proper subjects of Christ's kingdom.

3. The laws of the kingdom are given by Christ, and held on the following principles:—

(1.) Every church is bound to hold fast the writings of

the apostles as the voice of Christ for their government. Mat. x. 40; xviii. 18; xix. 28; xxviii. 18—20; 2nd Thes. ii. 15; 1st John iv. 6.

(2.) The approved example of the primitive churches, being the practice of known law, is as binding as positive precepts, except in things temporary. 1st Cor. iv. 17; vii. 17; xi. 2, 16.

(3.) The laws must be obeyed in the sense intended, and known as the words of the Lord and not of men. Acts xvii. 11—1st Cor. xiv. 36, 37—1st Thes. ii. 13.

(4.) Obedience must be rendered to Christ himself as the Head of the church, and in the midst of them. 1st Cor. v. 4—Eph. v. 24—Col. iii. 23—Heb. xii. 25.

(5.) It must be the obedience of faith, rendered willingly, without which there can be no acceptance now, nor reward hereafter. Psalm cx. 3—2nd Cor. viii. 12—1st Cor. ix. 17.

(6.) Obedience to *all* the laws of Christ. Mat. v. 18, 19; xxviii. 20—James ii. 10.

(7.) All his laws must be obeyed to the exclusion of all "the doctrines and commandments of men." Mat. xv. 9—Gal. i. 10; iv. 9—11; Col. ii. 8.

(8.) To the exclusion of all human creeds and standards, as placing the opinions of men in the room of the divine law, and as presenting a temptation to act by a borrowed faith,—and of all unscriptural "rule, authority, and power," for enforcing obedience to truth. 1st Cor. ii. 4, 5; xv. 24—2nd Cor. x. 3—5; 3rd John v. 9, 10.

(9.) Scripture law must rule the church in every thing, to the exclusion of acting on the principle of expediency. Gal. vi. 12, 13.

In the popular sense of the term, *expediency* consists in using means suitable for promoting a given end. But there is a great difference between moral and political expediency. The one aims at the accomplishment of no end, but by ways and means which the Lord hath appointed;

whilst the other assumes the end as the reason for devising means, regarded by man as expedient, irrespective of scripture law as the rule of duty. The one is the principle of moral government in the kindom of Christ, the other is the principle of human legislation. And a modification of the latter principle, assumed as the basis of the ethics of the school-men, and thereby incorporated with the popular national theology, has become a main source of corruption, by affording a license to sustain, on the ground of such expediency, what is admitted not to be taught in scripture.

The original word translated *expedient* in six texts of our Bible, is found in fifteen of the Greek text; and is rendered *profitable*, or words of the same meaning, in nine texts of the common translation, and is also so rendered in the other six, instead of the word *expedient*, by modern critics of great authority. There is not one word in the Greek text bearing the political sense of expediency now contended for, as having any place in the christian dispensation, because the Holy Spirit never intended that men should be left to the exercise of their own wisdom or will, in doing the work of the Lord. Christ must be obeyed in *the means and manner*, as well as matter of the service required. He has denounced "the wisdom of the world" as being altogether inadmissible in his service, and has revealed his wrath against all who "walk after their own thoughts." His blessing will be bestowed on the means of his own appointment only, and other means will produce fruit only after their own kind,—"dead works," —"fruit unto death."

It is also an essential element in the constitution of the kingdom of Christ, that every church must receive the privileges, laws, gifts, and office-bearers intended for their supply and government, only from Christ himself, as made over to them in his Testimony. It does not consist with holding the headship of Christ to depend on any pa-

tronage but that of him who is the head of supply, as well as of all authority and power; and who, in his Testimony, has conveyed a free grant of all christian privileges to his people. This testimony is their charter, the title-deeds of the kingdom, the ground of their right to receive from Christ himself by faith all that is contained in it, independently of the authority, dispensing power, or stewardship, of any separate order of men. It is by becoming, through grace, such as christian privileges were provided for, that believers have a right to receive and use them, as conveyed by Christ in his Testimony. "As many as believed on him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," and as sons they are entitled to all the privileges of children. According to the gospel commission, a church has the same right, in their associated capacity, to observe all things whatsoever Christ commanded, as to believe the gospel. And no church can admit foreign dispensing control in such matters, without impairing their union and communion with Christ as the head of supply.

This naturally leads to treat a little of the special relation between a church and its office-bearers, who are pastors* and deacons—the one intended to superintend the

* It has been contended that two distinct orders of office-bearers—one for ruling and another for teaching—is intimated by the text, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine," 1st Tim. v. 17. But that this is not the sense of the text, is evident from the qualifications both for ruling and teaching, being required in the one-person of the *bishop*, otherwise called an elder, pastor, &c., as being "apt to teach," and at the same time, "ruling well his own house," so as to appear also able to rule the church of God, 1st Tim. iii. 1.—5. Dr. Campbell, though a Presbyterian Minister, has candidly expressed his belief that the text affords no warrant for two orders of spiritual office-bearers. In his *Eccles. Hist. Sect.* vi., he says—"The *especially* is not intended to indicate a different office, but to distinguish from others those who assiduously apply themselves to the most important, as well as the most difficult parts of their office, public teaching; the distinction intended is, therefore, not official but personal, it does not relate to difference

spiritual, and the other the temporal concerns of the church. These are not appointed by patronage, lay or clerical, but by the free choice of the people, on finding who are qualified according to the scripture rule. In Acts vi. 1—6, the choice of deacons in this way is mentioned: and in Acts xiv. 23, it is said, "They ordained them elders in every church." The original word signifies to elect or choose to office by lifting up the hands,—the manner in which a church expresses their mind or concurrence in all the acts of social administration.

But it is required that a church be agreed in receiving the gifts Christ intends for them, otherwise they will be wanting in fellowship with him in the matter, and give occasion for what may impair confidence and hinder edification. When, therefore, there is the appearance of division, means should be used to promote unanimity. This would be impracticable among a people guided more by their personal tastes than by the principles of Christ's government, but perfectly practicable among a people more intent on receiving what the Lord provides, than on obtaining what they desire, as in the following instance:—A church invited the pastor of another church to come and preside over them in the choice of a pastor; and, finding them divided in opinion, he recommended a season of special prayer, that they might all be directed to one object. At the meeting for that purpose, in connexion with much prayer by the brethren, he explained to them how there was no law for the many to control the few—how, as only one pastor was needed at the time, there would be a differing from Christ on the part of some, as well as among themselves, should they not agree about one object—how, the way to unanimity in the matter was

in the powers conferred, but solely to a difference in their application." It may be added that, this corresponds with the different functions and relations of office, giving rise to a corresponding difference of designation of the same person being called Elder, Bishop, Pastor, Angel, and Minister.

to seek the man whom the Lord had chosen, and to ascertain this by finding which of the objects was most conformable to the view of pastoral qualification given by Paul in 1st Tim. iii. 1—7; Titus i. 5—9, expounded at the time for their guidance—warning them of the danger of asking a ruler to "judge them like the nations," instead of asking one "after God's own heart"—and entreating them to beware of being influenced by taste for "outward appearance," as in the case of Samuel when the sons of Jesse passed before him. 1st Sam. viii, 5; xvi. 6—12. He then urged them to lay aside all preposiGeas, and submit to scripture rule, praying for divine guidance, believing that the Lord would hear and answer. The end sought was gained. On retiring from the meeting, one said to the pastor, 'What you have taught this day has completely changed my views. I and others thought of calling Mr. ——, as being the more attractive preacher, but I now see that the other is more like to Paul's views of a pastor; and, if the rest see this, we shall be all of one mind. We have been praying, and I trust God will answer prayer.' And so it was found at another meeting, when all united in praising God joyfully, for leading them to be of one mind in the choice of a pastor.

In another case, one of a few who differed from the rest about the choice of a pastor, said to those who thought as he did, 'I begin to think we are wrong. The whole church, as well as we, have been praying for divine guidance in the choice of a pastor; and is there not reason to suppose, that he whom the great bulk of the church is disposed to call, is the object God intends for us, rather than the man preferred by a few? One one may be as well qualified as the other; and it strikes me, that, in Mr. —— being the object of the choice of a praying church, there is a providential intimation that he is the gift Christ intends for us. I shall, therefore, cordially subscribe the call, not on the principle of accommodation,—falling in

with the rest, as some would say; but I *make choice of him* because, all things considered, I have reason to regard him as the man the Lord hath chosen—the gift he is ready to bestow in answer to prayer.' His friends followed, and unanimity prevailed. Thus are disciples led to be of one mind when not seeking their own things, but the things of Christ.

Though chosen by the church, however, it is not from them but from Christ that a pastor derives his standing, authority, and power. In a free nation, the people are the fountain of political power; but in a church, Christ alone is the "head of all authority and power;" and, in calling a pastor, they neither ordain the office, nor create the talents to fill that office, but *receive the gift* Christ is exalted to bestow in terms of what is recorded in Eph. iv. 8—12. Hence it is said of pastors that the "Holy Ghost hath made them overseers" (Acts xx. 28), because he first forms them by grace for the work of the ministry—then induces them to "desire the office of a bishop,"—and finally disposes the church to call them to that office. Those who are thus made overseers, are not made so by the church, otherwise than as the instruments of calling them to office. It is by the grace of Christ that they are what they are and where they are, prepared and appointed by him, and only *received* from him by the church to hold the office he hath ordained, and all that pertains to that office. As by becoming a son of God, every believer obtains from God what pertains to children,—even so, by being placed in office, the pastor holds his right to all that pertains to that office, as Christ hath appointed,—responsible to him, depending on him, and subject to him in all things. The position of a pastor in a church, therefore, is very different from that of the chairman of a free society, who is at once the agent and object of democratic power. The standing and authority of the pastor are of heaven and not of [illegible]. He is "under" Christ, but

"over" the church,—the "servant" of Christ, but the "ruler" of the people—the "gift" of Christ to the church,—not, however, to be disposed of by them according to their pleasure, but a star in Christ's right hand, as the instrument of his ruling power.

This scriptural view of pastoral authority and power, is necessary for preparing a church to render the obedience of faith to "them that have the rule over them." They must regard the instructions of Bible truth, the authority of Christ, and the pastoral rule, in every act of social obedience. It would not be enough for members to follow Bible prescriptions without bowing to the authority of Christ,—so neither is it enough to regard both without "obeying them that have the rule over them." Christ commands obedience to the rulers in the same acts in which he himself is obeyed,—obedience to his own authority, first and chiefly, and obedience to the pastoral instrument of his government, in subordination to him. As there would be *great sin* in obeying the pastor without obeying Christ, so there would be *some sin* in obeying Christ without obeying the pastor,—sin consisting in violating the law requiring obedience to his servant as the instrument of his ruling power—Heb. xiii. 7. It will not do to say, that the pastor may be obeyed in the lesser, and Christ in the greater matters. The church must be subject to Christ "in every thing"—Eph. v. 24. And it is not less evident, that the church is commanded "to obey them that have the rule over them" in every thing. It is not enough that men conform to scripture law irrespectively of the ruler who applies the law. A man pretending to obey law, while setting aside the authority of the magistrate, would be punished for contempt of court. Nor will those, who, under cover of pretence of obeying scripture law, despise their pastors, be held guiltless by him who hath said, "He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.'

There can be no wholesome working of the energies of a church, and no reasonable hope of Christ working in them and by them, unless the hearts of the members are right with God in all that relates to the obedience, whether to Christ, apostles, or pastors.

But the authority and power of pastors consists wholly in the application of divine truth. Any thing in name of personal, official, or discretionary power, apart from the laws of Christ, they are appointed to teach and apply, is anti-christian. Authority to act in any matter rests in Christ's appointment to do so,—and the power which they employ is that of persuasion, and therefore "a power for edification, and not for destruction"—2nd Cor. x. 8.

A pastor, as the ruling guide of the church, has power to maintain order by rejecting all improper communications to the church. In 1st Tim. vi. 20; 2nd Tim. ii. 14, 23; Titus i. 10, 11, there is notice of "profane and vain babblings," "striving about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers,"—"foolish and untaught questions" of bad tendency, which rulers are commanded to "avoid," or, as some render the word, *reject*. And it was required that "the mouths of unruly and vain talkers should be stopped,"—not surely from speaking in the world, which could not be done, but stopped from speaking in the church. In every well ordered society, the president has power to prevent the intrusion of what has no proper relation to the business of the meeting, and to call to order or silence those who introduce irrelative matter; and the peace and order of churches would be at great hazard if their pastors had not similar powers. It should be remembered, also, that in supporting the authority of the pastor, a church promotes its own true interest; as, by failing to sustain the organ of authority and power, confusion would follow. As the most skilful navigator could not preserve a ship from going adrift, or from foundering or shipwreck, without the seamen doing their duty,

so the best pastoral administration could not profit a church without "the effectual working in the measure of every part of the body."

This naturally suggests a more particular consideration of the constitution of a church as adapted to its government, comprehending Christ, "the apostles and elders, with the whole church" (Acts xv. 22), having—1. Christ himself as supreme ruler in their midst. 1st Cor. v. 4. Rev. ii. 1. 2. The apostles, whose writings are the laws of government to the churches in all ages—1st Cor. xiv. 37. 3. Elders who are pastors, or a pastor to teach the laws of the kingdom for government—Heb. xiii. 17. 4. And "the whole church" to execute the law, understanding it to be the will of Christ—1st Cor. v. 4, 5; 2nd Cor. ii. 6.

The right of the church to execute the laws, by receiving or putting away, has been long neglected and much disputed by many, but is established by the following evidence:—

1. Such was the practice, by divine law, among the Jews—Levit. xxiv. 14; Num. xv. 32—36—xxxv. 12; Deut. xiii. 6—11; xvii. 2—13; xix. 15—21; Josh. vii. 25; xx. 6.

2. This ancient law was not abrogated but modified under the new dispensation, from death to putting away by the voice of the people—Mat. xviii. 17; 1st Cor. v. 13.

3. The right and obligation of a church to try and treat all connected with them as cause may require, was clearly shewn on the occasion of evil reports having been circulated against Paul at Jerusalem, when James and the elders, in reference to the case, said—"What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come"—Acts xxi. 22. It is here plainly admitted that even apostles were held amenable to the church, as commanded to "try the spirits whether they are of God." And, accordingly, Peter was tried on one occasion and acquitted. Acts xi. 1—18; and on another

occasion he was rebuked before all the brethren, when found faulty; Gal. ii. 11—14. And Christ commended the church at Ephesus because they had "tried them who said they were apostles, and were not," &c.—Rev. ii. 2.

4. This is further evident in the church at Corinth, and some of the churches in Asia, being found faulty in having neglected to put away improper characters from among them—1st Cor. v. 2; Rev. ii. 14, 20. The Lord could not have charged them with sin in such matters, had they not been commanded to do what they had neglected.

5. This privilege is the essential element in the voluntary character of churches. No society can be voluntary, sustaining freedom from compulsory power, and enjoying the blessings of christian liberty, without power in themselves, independently of foreign control, to choose or refuse, to retain or put away, as they understand Christ requires. Gal. ii. 1—5.

6. This is also required by the great interests sustaining the unity and communion of a church. In a joint-stock interest, each of the partners holds in his interest, a right to place and part in the management of its concerns, which, if neglected, is generally followed with loss and insolvency. Even so in a church: "The effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body," &c.—Eph. iv. 16.

7. Power to take part in purging the church, is also a necessary preparative for performance of the duties, and enjoyment of the privileges, of christian fellowship. There is in all the laws requiring that certain duties should be performed *to or with christians only*, a right and obligation to provide that such only should have part in that fellowship. And without acting on that right, there can be no confidence, no sympathy, no proper enjoyment, no profit, but loss and corruption in all social services—1st Cor. v. 7, 8; 2nd Cor. vi. 14—18.

8. The right and obligation of a church to execute the

laws of Christ, stand also on their relation to him as their Head. As in the natural body all the members act in concord with the head as the seat of intelligence and effective influence,—so, in a scriptural church, all the members act in union and communion with Christ their head, serving him and reigning with him in executing his laws—1st Cor. v. 4, 5; Rev. xx. 4—6. How will those, who have never taken part in receiving or putting away, be able to account for this neglect of the last day?

But, in the constitution of a church, there is also a special relation of its members one to another, which must be well understood, in order to be prepared for the wholesome working of the administration.

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## THE UNITY OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

While the Scriptures treat largely of the kingdom of Christ as comprehending all its members on the face of the earth, it is also shewn, that it is only in separate churches that its principles are developed by *each church representing the whole kingdom, and having access to all that pertains to it.* This accounts for one church being spoken of definitely as the whole, as where it is said to one church, "Now, *ye are the body of Christ*, and members in particular." Thus every scriptural church represents the unity, as well as faith and obedience, of the whole family of God. This suggests the consideration of the nature of church unity,—how it is formed,—the interests by which it is sustained,—its perfect bond,—its manifestation,—and the advantages afforded by it.

1. With regard to the nature of this relation, it has been customary to speak of the *union* of a church in reference to the combination of its members; and there is nothing but *union* in the relation of any society in which relation to Christ does not form the tie of the compact.

But the spiritual relation of a christian church is *unity*,—"one body,"—"one new man,"—one as Christ and the Father are one,—*essential oneness in Christ—indissoluble unity*. There is, no doubt, real unity among all who are one in Christ throughout the world, though known only to God. But the unity of a church is visible and practical, consisting in "dwelling together in unity," "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and "striving together for the faith of the Gospel." Ideal unity with all, without fellowship with some in the resident locality, would be no better than faith without profession and without works. But the thing required is *unity without uniformity*, as difference of opinion on secondary matters, arising from difference of attainment in knowledge among the weak and the strong, requiring the forbearance of love, consist perfectly with all being "one in Christ Jesus." And any terms of communion, in addition to that of relation to Christ, would form *sectarian union*, instead of the "unity of the Spirit."

2. The formation of this unity is the work of God, in which, by the influence of the truth, "believers are added to the Lord," and "added to the church," in which "God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him"—Acts v. 14—ii. 47: 1st Cor. xii. 18. It originates in all connected, whether Jews or Gentiles, being "reconciled unto God in *one body* by the cross"—Eph. ii. 16. It is by the atonement of Christ that they are brought *at-one*. By receiving Christ and ranking with him as "dead with him," "buried with him," "risen with him," and "living with him," they become one with him and one in him; and being reconciled to God by pardon through the death of his Son, they are inspired with love one to another, produced and sustained by the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Mutual choice also holds an important place in the formation of this unity. No one acquainted with the philo-

sophy of mind can conceive of unity of mind in any social adventure, without mutual choice and consent. The parties must "receive one another as Christ hath received them." There can be no proper spiritual unity of mind in a church where applicants are *put in* by the will of the rulers, without being *received* by the people. Such churches are *gathered*, but not practically *united*. A church is commanded, "Him that is weak in the faith" (as all young converts are) "receive ye, but not to doubtful disputation"—Rom. xiv. 1. The church at Jerusalem would not receive Saul of Tarsus till they obtained satisfactory evidence of his conversion. Nor can any church lawfully consent to receive members on other terms. This plan of receiving provides for mutual recognition of christian character, which is the basis of the confidence of love; and, in receiving one another by the right hand of fellowship, there is an open confession of the consummation of unity, which causes a lively feeling of interest in each other, imparting holy and delightful energy to the intercourse of brotherly love.

3. Unity so formed is sustained by great interest, of which the following is an outline:—

(1.) Interest in Christ—Gal. iii. 28; Heb. ii. 11; and in the Father through him—John xvii. 11, 22, 23; 1st Thes. i. 1; and in the dispensation of the Spirit—Eph. iv. 3; 1st Cor. xii. 11—13.

(2.) Interest in the whole truth of God, making them "like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind,"—Phil. ii. 2.

(3.) Interest in one another. "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"—Rom. xii. 5.

(4.) Interest of mutual sympathy. "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in body; but that the members should have the

same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it,"—1st Cor. xii. 24—26.

(5.) Interest of mutual dependence. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you,"—1st Cor. xii. 21.

(6.) Interest in all that pertains to the kingdom of God here and hereafter, as fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,"—"fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel,"—Eph. ii. 19—iii. 6.

(7.) Interest in the administration of Christ's kingdom, in the execution of his laws, for purging, gathering, and building up, so as to promote his cause and glory,—1st Cor. v. 3—5, 7, 13. Eph. iv. 15, 16. Rom. xii. 5—8. 1st Cor. iii. 21—23.

In their common interest in those great and good fruits of the wisdom and love of God, a church feel their "hearts knit together in love," and disposed to abound in the practice of love, consisting in keeping Christ's commandments, for promoting the common good, and his glory, without which all other ties of professed unity would be no better than a rope of sand.

4. The bond of this unity is *love*, which is called "the bond of perfectness," because it is the very life blood of the body of Christ. Properly speaking, love is unity; and in order to unity being perfected, love must be of the perfect quality. Now, this love is very different in its nature from mere animal affection. It is more than natural affection improved. It is even more than the exercise of love induced by God's love towards us. It is nothing short of Christ's love to his people, in them, and extended by them, one towards another. As the life of believers consists in "Christ's living in them" (Gal. ii. 20), and their joy consists in "His joy remaining in

them" (John xv. 11), so their love consists in His love being in them,—expanding in love one to another,—the whole body in sympathy with the head, in terms of the memorable saying, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you, *continue ye in my love*"—John xv. 9. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, *and his love is perfected in us*"—1st John iv. 12. There is more here than the notion of the love of Christ being the reason and rule of our love one towards another. It is in the love of the Head, taking with it the sympathies of the members of the body, that in loving one another they shew that they are loved by Christ, and loving one another as he hath loved them. But there is a variety of properties pertaining to this love, which must be well understood in order that it may "abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment."

A brief abstract of the prime qualities of love, is contained in 1st Cor. xiii. 4—7, "Love suffereth long and is kind: love envieth not; love is not rash or precipitate, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh evil, on rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; covereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This requires more than occasional attention. The careful study of it should form a part of the closet exercise of every day, as essential to soul prosperity. But there are other properties of love which must be understood in order to regulate their application.

Disciples must distinguish between the love due to all men, and "brotherly love,"—the one regarding its objects with that compassion of benevolence which seeks their conversion and salvation; the other regarding its objects with special interest, as Christ's property,—with esteem as bearing his image,—with confidence for the truth's sake dwelling in them, and "loving them with pure hearts fervently," as brethren of the same family, as

members of the same body, and as "fellow-heirs of the grace of life." There are also relative duties of love due to those classes respectively, in confounding of which there is error in judgment and corruption in practice.

There is also a difference between the benevolence and complacency of love; the one consisting of endeavours to do good to its object,—the other of delight in the object as found worthy of kind regards. Now, many are deceived in supposing that the law of love is fulfilled in their experience of complacency, induced by spiritual qualities in the object, and that they are justified in not loving those whom they hold as not meriting such regards, while the principle and practice of the benevolence of love are wanting. But there can be no pure complacency without benevolence, which, like the love of God, embraces its objects *as they are*, intent on doing them good, so as, thereby, to find occasion of delight in them. Complacency, without benevolence, is not pure love, but the corrupt offspring of selfishness.

The principle in question should be tested by distinguishing between the emotions and practices of love; the one consisting of the affections of the heart towards its object,—the other in the performance of the duties of love, by obeying Scripture law. The whole law of God is suspended on love, and intended to regulate its practice, Mat. xxii. 37—40, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. xiii. 10. John xv. 10. The practice of love, therefore, consisteth not in shewing kindness as dictated by the natural inclinations of the heart, after the manner of the world, but in performing every duty of love, as required by law, for promoting spiritual as well as temporal welfare. Actions apart from holy affection, are "dead works," because proceeding from no vital principle, and love without works is also "dead, being alone."

In order that love may be exercised "in knowledge and in all judgment," it is necessary to fix the boundaries

between the faithfulness and forbearance of love. Love is faithful. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," Rev. iii. 19. See also Levit. xix. 17. But the forbearance of love claims exemption from rebuke in behalf of its object, in so far as what is objectionable in his conduct is the result of remaining ignorance, &c.

The relation of the confidence and fellowship of love must be also understood, in order to give love a wholesome working-place in the social circle. The confidence of love rests in having good reason to regard its object as a Christian, having a claim on all that pertains to brotherly love, and the fellowship of love is the interchange of affection and of the duties of love founded on that confidence. Now, the duties of the fellowship of love would be misapplied without that confidence; and an avowal of confidence, without fellowship, would be no better than admitting a great debt to be due without any effort to make payment.

5. The unity of a church is manifested by open confession of the truth, as "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," 1st Cor. i. 10;—by expressions of brotherly kindness, shewing that their "hearts are knit together in love," Col. ii. 2;—by "striving together for the faith of the gospel," Phil. i. 27;—by sitting together at the Lord's table,—"We being many are one bread and one body," 1st Cor. x. 17;—and by statedly meeting together in one place for religious services,—"All that believed were together," Acts ii. 44.

All the commands to attend to social duties bind believers to meet for the performance of them, according to the precept, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together," Heb. x. 25. The authority of primitive example binds them to meet every Lord's day, Acts xx. 27—1st Cor. xvi. 1;—and as occasions require, Acts xxi. 22;—or daily if expedient and practicable, Acts ii. 46. There is special obligation to observe the sacred day of rest as

wholly devoted to religious exercise—not a part, but the whole day called "*the Lord's day*," and therefore set apart wholly and exclusively for the Lord's service. But there is the same binding obligation of primitive example to meet at other times as occasions require. And as Christ has left his people to exercise their own judgment in fixing the times of such meetings, their consent to meet at any given time, is an engagement to meet with him, binding them to fulfil that engagement. And shortcoming in attendance at the time fixed for the commencement of worship, without cause, is a violation of that engagement with Christ, and of scripture order, and of the law of love, and causes grief to others from their being annoyed by late entry, diverting attention during the solemn exercises of worship, and causing the offering of a torn, lame, or unmeaning sacrifice, which may provoke God to withhold his blessing.

6. The advantages afforded by connexion with a church scripturally and fitly framed together, are:—Freedom from human bondage in all things pertaining to God, Gal. ii. 4, 5;—enjoyment of the perfect "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," Gal. v. 1; access to all the ordinances intended for working out our salvation, 1st Cor. xi. 2;—rest of soul in bearing the yoke of Christ, Mat. xi. 29;—soul satisfaction in finding proper provision and accommodation for serving Christ, Eph. ii. 19;—the comfort of love in dwelling together with brethren, Phil. ii. 1, 2;—great and inestimable benefits arising from the watchful care, sympathies, prayers, and kind offices of the love of brethren, Eph. iv. 15, 16; the rejoicing of a good conscience in walking by Bible truth, so as to please God, 2nd Cor. i. 12;—great blessedness in the enjoyment of the promised presence and blessing of Christ while doing his commandments, Rev. xxii. 14;—great joy in the success of the truth, Acts xv. 3;—and the blessed prospect,

in being faithful unto the death, of obtaining the crown of life, Rev. ii. 10. But those advantages are found in the practice of christian fellowship.

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## THE FELLOWSHIP OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The fellowship of a church consists of the intercourse of its members with Christ and one another, in the use of the privileges, and performance of the duties of their association, whether stated or occasional, for promoting their own spiritual benefit, the salvation of a lost world, and the glory of God. It is called "fellowship in the gospel," as promoted by gospel influence, and affording enjoyment of gospel blessings. Phil. i. 5,—"the fellowship of the Spirit," as maintained by the dispensation of the Spirit. Phil. ii. 1,—and "the fellowship of God's Son," as sustained by his glorious person, sacrifice, and mediation. 1st Cor. i. 9—by which, as members of his body, believers are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," Eph. ii. 19—"fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel," Eph. iii. 6—and "fellow-workers in the kingdom of God," Col. iv. 11—but having "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," Eph. v. 11. 2nd Cor. vi. 14—18.

In this fellowship there are such giving and receiving, as minister spiritual supply; and such working towards each other or together, as promotes the common good.

Spiritual supplies are ministered by giving and receiving, on the principle of union with "the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God," Col. ii. 19. In this way, by speaking and doing the truth, they are the instruments of supply

to each other, ministering the Spirit and spiritual supplies by the Spirit's testimony, "speaking the truth in love." Gal. iii. 2, 5.

The common good is promoted by disciples working towards each other or working together, as where it is said, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the head even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." Eph. iv. 15, 16.

The stated duties of fellowship, are those which relate to the stated meetings of the church;—social worship in prayer and praise—reading and hearing the Scriptures—preaching and hearing the world for the confession, defence and propagation of truth, in promoting the edification of the church and the conversion of the world—the observance of the Lord's Supper, making contributions for the supply of the poor, and for affording wages to "them that labour in word and doctrine,"—and such acts of discipline as occasions require.

The occasional duties of fellowship are:—

1. On all occasions exercising love, "Seeing ye have purified your hearts in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently," 1st Pet. i. 22.

2. Mutual salutation. "Salute every saint in Christ Jesus," Phil. iv. 21.

3. Receiving one another. "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God," Rom. xv. 7.

4. Mutual expressions of kindness and courtesy. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another," Rom. xii. 10.

5. Exercising sympathy and compassion one towards another. "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another," 1st Pet. iii. 8.

6. Cultivating concord and condescension. "Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits," Rom. xii. 16.

7. Instructing one another. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another," Col. iii. 16.

8. Mutual exhortation. "Exhort one another daily," &c. Heb. iii. 13; x. 24, 25.

9. Mutual support under infirmities and burdens. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," Gal. vi. 2. Rom. xv. 1, 2, 3.

10. Mutual endeavours to promote each other's temporal prosperity. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth," 1st Cor. x. 24. Phil. ii. 4.

11. Hospitality one to another, especially to strangers. "Use hospitality one to another, without grudging," 1st Peter iv. 9. Rom. xii. 13. Heb. xiii. 2.

12. Ministering to the afflicted. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world," James i. 27.

13. Mutual submission. "Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder; yea all of you be subject one to another." 1st Pet. v. 5. Eph. v. 21.

But there are laws applicable to all the duties of fellowship, such as—regarding the will of God in every duty. Eph. v. 17—Hearing Christ in all things. Acts iii. 22—Doing all things in the name of Christ. Col. iii. 17—Obedience to divine law in all things. 2nd Cor. ii. 9—Doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving. Eph. vi. 18. 1st Thess. v. 18—Doing all things in love and meekness. 1st Cor. xvi. 14. Phil. ii. 3—Disinterested in all things. Phil.

ii. 4, 5—Doing all things for peace and edification. Rom. xiv. 19. 1st Cor. xiv. 26—Doing all for maintaining mutual confidence. 2nd Cor. vii. 10—All things decently and in order. 1st Cor. xiv. 40—Doing all for the good and honour of the church, and for the glory of God. Titus ii. 10. 1st Cor. x. 31.

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## MUTUAL WATCHFULNESS.

It is, no doubt, the special duty of pastors to "watch for souls;" but, it is also the duty of all the members of a church to watch over one another in love,—which may be done with advantage, by observing closely each other's spirit and conduct in the common intercourse of life. The interests of a church would suffer greatly, if left to the limited survey of a pastor. That this duty is binding on all, is evident from these commands: "Let us consider one another"—Heb. x. 24. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"—Phil. ii. 4. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"—Heb. xii. 15.

The neglect of this commanded duty indicates a state of mind conformable to that of Cain, who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?"—a state of mind callous to the appointment of God, and the best interests of brethren,—or, some may wink at the faults of others by a false forbearance, conscious that their own conduct cannot bear inspection. The consequences resulting from such negligences are awful. Souls are in danger of perishing, from want of the means necessary to restore them from sin; the church is exposed to corruption and trouble, and those neglecting to watch will be held guilty by God as the causes of those evils.

In attending to this duty, every one should take heed

to his own spirit and motives, carefully watching over himself, lest he also be tempted; thus will he be prepared to watch over his brethren in love, from sincere concern for their spiritual welfare,—not watching with a desire for their halting, or for finding matter of accusation, but to suggest or do what will remove evil and promote good, when occasion requires.

The ends intended by mutual watchfulness, must also be well understood, and care taken to promote them. On seeing what is of doubtful propriety, inquiry must be made for removing all grounds of suspicion, that the confidence of love may stand unimpaired—Acts xi. 1—18. On discovering remaining ignorance in brethren, means must be used to "instruct them in the way of the Lord more perfectly"—Acts xviii. 26. On finding them weak and in heaviness, they must be encouraged and comforted—1st Thes. v. 14. On seeing them ensnared by error, they must be admonished and restored—James v. 19, 20. On observing how they are exposed to temptation, they must be warned to avoid and resist—Col. i. 28. On seeing them wanting in duty, they must be exhorted to greater diligence—Heb. x. 24, 25. On finding them poor and needy, they must be supplied—1st John iii. 17;—and, on seeing them offending, by violating the principles of their holy profession, they must be treated as the laws of Christ require—Mat. xviii. 15—17. But it cannot be expected that all things objectionable will be at once adjusted to the satisfaction of the complainer. There are many things which, in consideration of the state of mind in reference to them, call for christian forbearance.

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## MUTUAL FORBEARANCE.

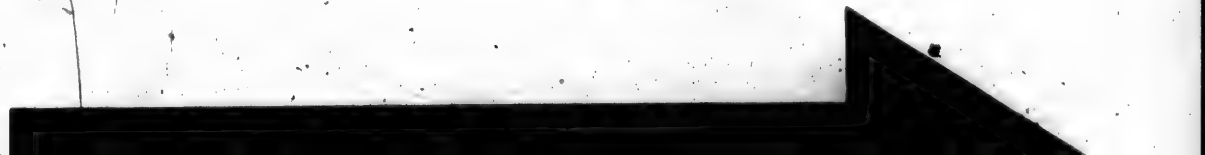
On this branch of love it is written, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness

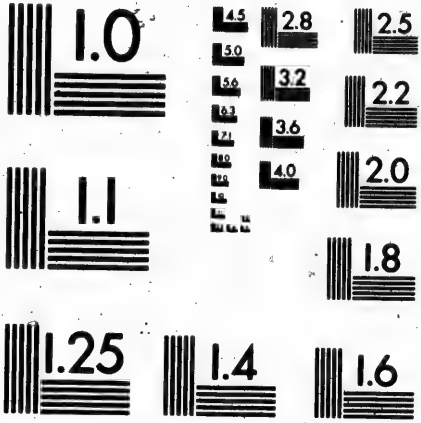
and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one [illegible] in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the [illegible] the bond of peace"—Eph. iv. 1—3. "Put on, th[illegible] as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of m[illegible] kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suff[illegible] forbearing one another, and forgiving one another"—Col. iii. 12, 13. In these passages, forbearance is mentioned not as cold indifference, but as the offspring of love, which worketh no evil but good. As the coadjutor of "kindness, meekness, and humbleness of mind," it abstains from the proceedings of pride and anger. As following "long-suffering," it abstains from what human passions might meditate by way of retaliation, when suffering by the faults of others. And, as providing for "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," it abstains from all measures tending to division. In exercising this standard grace of the social relation, it is required—

1. That we be found forbearing to employ compulsory proceedings, which would violate christian liberty and the sacred rights of conscience, by compelling any to act beyond the convictions of duty, or contrary to the rule, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind"—Rom. xiv. 5; Gal. ii. 3—5.

2. Forbearing, in so far as consists with scriptural principles, to do what would grieve or stumble a weak brother, as in the case of not eating or drinking what had been offered to idols, when doing so might injure those who are wanting in knowledge. "If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died"—Rom. xiv. 15.

3. Forbearing all uncharitable judgment of a brother on account of difference of opinion on minor points. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ"—Rom. xiv. 10.



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4. Forbearing all prejudice and improper feeling on account of differences of opinion about secondary matters. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him"—Rom. xiv. 3.

5. Forbearing to make points of difference a reason for not walking together, in so far as all are agreed. "Let us therefore, as many be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing"—Phil. iii. 15, 16.

6. Forbearing to allow differences on minor matters to impair love. In the exercise of long-suffering and forbearance, Christ loves his people *as they are*, notwithstanding all their shortcoming in knowledge and duty; and he hath said, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you"—John xv. 12. Those, then, are not loving their brethren after this rule, who allow their kind regards to be impaired by such differences, while having good reason to love one another for the truth's sake dwelling in them.

It has been alleged, that forbearance with one who is regarded as thinking or acting wrong, amounts to toleration of sin. But forbearance relates, not to the thought or action so much as to the state of mind of the individual, being regarded as incapable of thinking or acting otherwise for the time, from being ill instructed or weak. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves"—Rom. xv. 1. In this view of the principle, what might admit of forbearance in one, might call for rebuke in another. The man that refuses to act from conscientious scruples in some things, arising from defective knowledge or prejudice, while otherwise giving evidence of walking by faith and in the fear of the Lord, is a proper subject of forbearance. But he

that violates the known rules of duty, must be treated as an offender. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"—James iv. 17.

It is not, therefore, correct or scriptural to speak of a church making any point in dispute a matter of forbearance. A church has no more right to make any opinion or practice a matter of forbearance, than to make laws on any other subject. It is only with the defective state of mind in christians that they have to forbear; and this is not *optional but imperative;* forbearing not only from being so disposed in love, but chiefly because Christ hath so commended; and because all attempts to enforce compliance or conformity without conviction, are proceedings of anti-christian oppression, at variance with the liberty with which Christ hath made his people free, injurious to all concerned, and dishonouring to Christ as subverting his government. It is owing to the misunderstanding of this great principle, or, rather, owing to deficiency of long-suffering and forbearance, that discords have arisen, which have divided those who, otherwise, might have been walking in love. But all forbearance must be *mutual*, in order to being effective in "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Much forbearance, patience, and meekness, are required in treating offenders, as shewn in Gal. vi. 1; 2nd Tim. ii. 24—26. But no such forbearance is due to a presumptuous offender, as what is due to a weak brother not conscious of sinning. Nor should the latter be let alone, without endeavours to instruct and promote agreement of sentiment in all things. While forbearing to *compel*, it is proper to use all scriptural means to *persuade*, avoiding the spirit of carnal strife and contention. But, in addition to what calls for forbearance as now explained, there are improprieties of conduct which should be corrected by brotherly admonition. And care should be taken, not to pervert forbearance into a license to wink at offences.

## OFFENCES AS OCCASIONS OF STUMBLING.

The word *offended*, as in common use, signifies nothing more than being displeased; because many regard the sins of others only as displeasing to themselves, without thinking of how they are stumbled by them, or of what is required for removing the stumbling-block out of the way. But the scripture term "offence," signifies sin, as offending God and his people, and as being a stumbling-block, causing sin in others, and hindering them in the performance of duty. The origin of offences is "lust," called a "right hand" and a "right eye," by which the subject is stumbled out of the way of duty to fall into sin, and becomes an occasion of stumbling to others, Mat. xviii. 8—James i. 15. Offences are a woe to the church, to the word, to the offended, and to the offender, (Mat. xviii. 6, 7,) and should be considered, in their relation to God, as violations of his law,—in relation to others, as temptations to sin and hindrances in the way of duty,—and in relation to the offender, as particularly injurious to himself.

1. Offences are against God, being violations of his law, as Christ said unto Peter, "Thou art an offence unto me." Every estimate of offence must be formed by ascertaining to what extent the offender has violated divine law. It is not enough that any have taken offence so as to be displeased at the proper performance of duty. No man can be justly held as an offender, without proof that he has violated some known law, and thereby sinned against God.

2. Offences are occasions of sin to others, and hinderances in the way of duty. Many are stumbled by the offences of their associates as occasions of temptation to commit the same sin, as Adam was stumbled by the sin of Eve;—or by imitating the offence, as those who "followed the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made

Israel to sin;"—or by consenting to popular devices without regard to scriptural law, as did Aaron in making the golden calf;—or by giving place to the workings of carnal policy, as in the case of Peter's offence, when "other Jews dissembled with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation;"—or by submitting to misrepresentations, as in the case of the Jews, who stumbled and fell in the wilderness by regarding the opinion of the carnal spies more than the promise and command of God;—or by receiving evil communications, as when, by the tale of slander, one is stumbled into the sin of "taking up a reproach against his neighbour."

Offences are also to others a hindrance in the way of duty. In so far as the confidence of love is impaired, by the offence rendering doubtful the sincerity of the profession of the offender, it becomes impracticable to perform to him, in faith, some of the duties of fellowship, or to co-operate with him in confidence as a "fellow-worker" in the service of Christ. Being yoked together in fellowship, the fall of one entangles and hinders others from working as formerly, till the fallen offender is either restored or separated, 2nd Cor. vi. 14. And when the offence consists of shortcoming in social duties, others may thereby be hindered in doing their part, as when shewn by Moses when describing the intended shortcoming of Gad and Reuben, as tending to discourage, hinder, and destroy the whole congregation of Israel. Num. xxxii. 6—15.

3. But the offence is particularly injurious to the offender himself; as in addition to its effects in paralyzing the moral energies of his own soul, separating between him and God, and rendering him unfit for the duties and enjoyments of his holy profession, it subjects him to the displeasure of Him who holds the offence standing against him, making him also responsible for its effects as a woeful occasion of stumbling to the church and to the world.

But many are offended without cause, and even offended at the truth. Some are improperly offended, without cause, by taking up an evil report without evidence of its truth;—others, by rash misconception of what, if properly understood, would form no ground of offence;—others, by harbouring suspicion of evil, without evidence of its existence;—others, by seeking matter of accusation to justify some previous alienation of affection;—others, by a desire to find some as bad as themselves for supporting a vain hope under spiritual decay, and, perhaps, from being intent on making "a man an offender for a word," who has acted the part of a reprover in the gate. Such conduct indicates want of that love which "thinketh no evil," "which is not easily provoked," and which "endureth all things;"—want of common honesty, in giving place to impressions not warranted by evidence;—and want of subjection to divine authority, in allowing the mind to take a course so contrary to the law of Christ. There is a sense, however, in which, being offended or stumbled by the offence of another, is no sin, but duty—namely, being displeased at the offence, in hating what Christ hates, and stumbled through confidence in the offender being thereby impaired or destroyed. Being displeased at the offence, consists perfectly with the benevolence of love towards the offender, nor could the offended continue his confidence in the offender, while finding cause in the offence to "stand in doubt of him." In this the offended sinneth not. But if tempted by the offence to feel and act as above described, and, consequently, shewing the diseased state of his mind by telling to others how much he has been *hurt* by the offence, rather than telling the offender himself what might restore his soul from sin, he shews the witness in himself that *he has been stumbled into sin*, and that he stands as much in need of the means of restoration as the brother by whose fall he has been stumbled.

From the foregoing view, it is evident, that there is ur-

gent call to watch against giving or taking offence. The best preservative against giving offence is in the cultivation of brotherly love. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is *none occasion of stumbling in him*, 1st John ii. 10. And the love of the truth is the best antidote against taking offence. "Great peace have they who love thy law, *nothing shall offend them*, Psalms cxix. 165. Though offences tend to stumble others, there is no license to be stumbled by them, as we are commanded not to give place to temptation, but to remove the stumbling-block out of the way.

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## REMOVAL OF OFFENCES.

Every offence must he removed, by leading the offender to repentance or by excluding him from the church, if continuing impenitent. The laws requiring this are too numerous to be mentioned, but a few may be selected, shewing the reasons and ends of this great fundamental principle of the christian administration, viz. :—

1. For making manifest fidelity to Christ. "There must be also heresies among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you," 1st Cor. xi. 19.

2. For shewing conformity of mind to Christ "in purging his Father's house," John ii. 17.

3. For shewing a practical testimony against sin, as did the church at Ephesus, who "could not bear them that were evil," Rev. ii. 2.

4. For preparing to serve Christ in purity. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work," 2nd Tim. ii. 20, 21.

5. For removing occasions of stumbling and trouble from the church. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled," Heb. xii. 15.

6. For maintaining the purity of the church. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out, therefore, the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened," 1st Cor. v. 6, 7.

7. For finding favour with God. "Be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2nd Cor. vi. 17. 18.

8. For shewing true love to the offender. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and not suffer sin upon him," Levit. xix. 17.

9. For gaining the reward of saving souls. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins," James v. 19, 20.

10. For avoiding the guilt of soul-murder, in leaving any fallen brother to perish through neglect of means to reclaim him. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" Pro. xxiv. 11, 12.

11. For preventing the church from being charged with retaining impenitent offenders, as were some of the churches of Asia, Rev. ii. 14, 20.

12. For removing the "woe unto the world because of offences." In consequence of the ungodly being cut off from the church, so as to shew to the world the difference

between the precious and the vile, it is said that, "great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women," Acts v. 11—14.

There is weight in these considerations, which cannot fail to determine the enlightened fearers of God to attend to this duty, and the neglect of it indicates want of subjection to Christ,—want of likeness to him who came to destroy sin and save souls,—want of love to offending brethren, in failing to do what is necessary to restore and save them,—and want of proper concern for the purity and prosperity of the church, &c.,—an amount of wants, which nearly indicate being wanting in all that pertains to eternal life.

There are many, however, who attempt to justify themselves in neglecting this duty by arguments which serve only to make manifest their being wanting in some of the principles of "the new man." Some neglect it, alleging that they have enough to do in attending to their salvation, without meddling with the affairs of others. But such know not, or forget, that they cannot be saved without attending to this as well as the rest of Christ's commandments, as the calls of duty require. Others excuse themselves on the ground of alleged incapacity for the work. But this excuse is groundless, in the view of needful help being afforded in the warrant to take "one or two more," in the event of personal efforts being unsuccessful. Others wink at the faults of brethren, supposing that, in doing so, they are "following the things which make for peace." But this is peace with sin,—the peace of spiritual death, preventing true peace with God. Others neglect this labour of love lest they should forfeit the favour of the offender, and provoke his resentment. But this indicates more desire to secure his favour, than

to save his soul,—more dread of suffering his displeasure, than fear of his perishing by being left to "bear his iniquity." There is, therefore, no ground of excuse, but strong obligation to attend this duty, which cannot be neglected without becoming "partakers of other men's sins."

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## PREPARATION FOR THE TREATMENT OF OFFENCES.

In the treatment of all kinds of offences, it must be remembered, that there are special qualifications necessary for ensuring success: namely, such love to Christ, and to his people for his sake, as will induce to willing and unwearied exertion in promoting his cause and glory,—such a strong sense of obligation to Christ, as will determine to serve him at all hazards,—such confidence in his promised presence and blessing, as will render fearless of all difficulty and opposition,—such hatred of sin, as will not admit of "bearing them that are evil," without endeavouring to reclaim or put them away,—such "compassion for them that are ignorant and out of the way," as will induce to "save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire,"—such meekness, as will prevent what would provoke, and produce what may win the offending brother,—such humility, as may subdue prejudice in the offender, and dispose him for the candid consideration of truth,—such knowledge of human nature and of the word of God, and such wisdom in the application of truth, as may instruct and persuade unto repentance,—such faithfulness, as will neither withhold the applications necessary to promote a broken heart, nor heal the hurt slightly,—such patient perseverance, as will neither faint nor fail till all required is accomplished,—and such leaning on Christ in the spirit of believing prayer, as will prevail with God

and with man in finding that success by which God will be glorified.

In connexion with the cultivation of these graces, the offended party must examine himself, so as to ascertain whether he has not been stumbled by the offence, as, in such a case, he must first resort to means for purging and restoring his own soul, without which he can have no capacity for restoring his fallen brother. In cases of personal trespass, there is great danger of being stumbled into the sin of seeking to avenge the wrong, by rendering evil for evil. When the offence contains personal insult, there is danger of being provoked thereby to speak unadvisedly, as did Moses, when, after being accused unjustly by the people, he said, "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of the rock?" When personal interests are supposed to be affected by the offence, there is danger of giving place to jealousy, envy, and anger, as when "the ten were moved with indignation against the two brethren," who sought ascendancy over them in their Lord's kingdom. When mortified by the reproach occasioned by the offence, there is danger of giving place to a desire to get rid of the offender rather than to restore him. When the offended party forgets that he also is a sinner exposed to temptation, there is danger of fostering the pride of thinking himself superior to him that has fallen, and thus despising him, neglect the means appointed for promoting his recovery.

Great care should be taken to have the mind completely purged from all improper feeling occasioned by the offence to be treated, because there will be danger in acting under the influence of evil passions—of doing more harm than good. The rule is, "First cast out the beam of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." But there is a difference between private and public offences, and between

that of a man "overtaken in a fault"—and hypocrisy detected by the discovery of long continuance in secret sin, which must be treated respectively, as "the Spirit saith unto the churches."

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## TREATMENT OF A PRIVATE OFFENCE BY THE OFFENDED.

A PRIVATE offence is any injury done to another, or an offence against God, known only to one or more, who will not tell it to others; and though entailing no personal injury, it is the duty of any who knows it to treat it as required by the laws of Christ. The law on this branch of the administration is very explicit. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican"—Mat. xviii. 15—17. This comprehends the following particulars:—

1. This law is *imperative*, not *optional*, but of binding obligation—as positive and peremptory as "Do this in remembrance of me;" and hence, cannot be neglected by any disciple, without dishonouring Christ and wronging his own soul, and also causing injury to the offender and to the church of God.

2. It is worthy of special notice, that the party suffering by the "trespass" of the offender, is here required to *take the lead* in seeking to restore his soul to God. This is contrary to corrupt nature, but it is a first principle in the dispensation of grace, which teaches to render good

for evil, and corresponds with the perfect example of Christ, who sought to save them who slew him. It is, moreover, a test of pure disinterested benevolence, well fitted to convince those who neglect this duty, that they are wanting in likeness to Christ—wanting in pure love, and that they are in a fallen condition, as well as the offender.

3. The command, "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him *alone*," implies that he should not tell it to others. This is intended to prevent the offended party from sinning, by violating the law of love, which "covereth a multitude of sins." No person can, without proper cause, report evil against one that he loves; and "he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." This clause of the law is further intended to prevent the pain and stumbling to the church, and the woe unto the world, which would arise from that being made known which might be disposed of in private. It is also intended for the benefit of the offender, that, in the event of repentance, he may not suffer in his reputation, by another giving publicity to his private sins. God never reports the secret sins of his people; when repented of and pardoned, they are "remembered no more." Nor does he permit their private offences, known only to one or more brethren, to be told, but in so far as may be required in the use of means to produce repentance. The privacy here enjoined is also necessary for gaining the offender, who could not be expected to profit by the communications of one who had shewn the want of love to him, by making known his private trespass: by which, also, the offended would appear disqualified for his work, as not subject to this law of Christ, and wanting in the love essential to success. In such a case, the offended would be fully warranted to refuse hearing his brother,—not only on the ground of incapacity for treating the case as now mentioned, but also because, having made it public, it is no longer a sub-

ject for private treatment, but makes both parties amenable to the church, as in all other cases of public offence.

But there is sin in *hearing or receiving*, as well as in *telling*, the private faults of offenders. The man that listens to a tale-bearer, becomes a partaker of his sin, the same as he that receives stolen goods, knowing that they are stolen, is a partaker with the thief. Every faithful and honourable man will watch against tale-bearers, as tempters, subverting the scriptural administration, and rebuke them sharply; for it is written, "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off"—Psal. ci. 5.

4. The command, "Go and tell him his fault," further implies:—(1.) That the offended must not lock it up in his own bosom, and dwell upon it in silence, else it will become a ground of grudge that will expose him to condemnation—James v. 9. He must rebuke the offender, and in no ways leave this undone to the injury of his own soul, and at the hazard of being charged with the blood of his brother. (2.) That he must not act rashly, speaking when the trespass has been committed, and when passions may have been thereby excited; but, after retiring to reflect and pray, he must "*go*" prepared for doing what is commanded. (3.) That he must go, not to tell how much he has *suffered* by the trespass, which would indicate a selfish spirit of resentment, tending more to promote a quarrel than to gain the brother, but he must go in the generous spirit of love, to tell the offender how much he has been *in fault*, that thus he may be awakened to repentance. And, considering that injury is generally followed with hatred on the part of him that inflicts it, and dread of the sufferer being disposed to avenge the wrong, it becomes the more necessary, at the outset, to remove all prejudice of the kind, by exercising the God-like long-suffering of love,—shewing that the object of the interview is not to seek restitution, or even to complain of the injury, but to restore the soul of him who has fallen

by inflicting it. But, without winking at aggravating circumstances, care should be taken not to find the offender more in fault than a correct view of the whole case warrants,—thus shewing a kind, conciliatory spirit, and candid readiness to give place to all that can be offered in extenuation of his guilt—proceeding in the style of inquiry rather than of accusation, and endeavouring to find agreement about the facts of the case, as the proper foundation for judgment and all proceedings which may follow.

But the offender must be told more than the facts of the case already known to him. He must be told his "fault," as consisting in violation of the laws of Scripture, and the law of love, bringing home these laws to his understanding and heart, for convincing him of the true character of his offence, as dishonouring to God, and injurious to his own soul, shewing him how his trespass indicates a state of mind inconsistent with his holy profession, as when Christ told to Peter that his words, "savoured not of the things that be of God, but those that be of men;" and as when Peter shewed Simon Magus how his words indicated that his "heart was not right in the sight of God." This should be followed by proposing every Scriptural inducement to repentance, always shewing that the end intended is not to degrade or conquer, but to gain the erring brother, by the kind and persuasive proceedings of truth and love, and speaking so as to remind him that he has to do with Christ as a Saviour and Judge, and that he must resort to Him for pardon and repentance, as the only way of recovery. And every interview of the kind should be opened and closed with fervent prayer, for guidance and success.

In services of this kind, much difficulty, in some cases, must be encountered arising from the effects of the offence on the mind of the transgressor. The power of prejudice, formed by the hardening influence of sin, generally leads the offender to regard such services as an intrusion

on his liberty, to count his faithful monitor an enemy in telling him the truth, to meet and resist the admonitions of love by expressions of angry passion, or recrimination, perhaps, to attempt to justify himself, by alleging that some are, in other respects, more guilty than himself,—and to take occasion to prolong conversation on some relative circumstance, for avoiding what is mainly censurable. But, in the worst view of the case, at the outset, the reprover should beware of thinking or speaking of the case as *hopeless*, as, in failing to hope for success, he would naturally fail in making endeavours for that end. Sin produces moral madness; but there is no prejudice or passion too strong for being overcome by the "grace and truth which come by Christ Jesus." And there is "need of patience." Business of this kind can seldom be settled at one meeting; and, when there is no immediate appearance of repentance, it will be well to submit a "word in season," from the Bible, for the offender's consideration, requesting him to confer with God, in private, about its application, as a preparative for another interview. But great care should be taken to prevent discussion becoming a party quarrel.

5. This prescription, for individual treatment of the offender "alone," is followed by a notice of prospective success, intended no doubt, to excite the offended to labour in hope. "If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." This implies that he had spoken the truth in season to him for his recovery, else the offender had better not have heard him; and the hearing here mentioned is more than the hearing of the ear; it is the hearing of faith and obedience, shewn in the confession of sin, by which the offender is gained from his fallen condition,—gained to the love of the truth,—gained to Christ,—and gained to the offended brother, to the wonted exercise of brotherly love, by "repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." But no repentance can be regarded genuine,

but as produced by the influence of Scripture truth, convincing of sin, and leading to God for pardon and acceptance through Christ, shewn by the confession of sin and corresponding expressions of grief on account of having offended, with resolution to forsake sin and live to God. All confessions, not spontaneous, but, seemingly, the result of necessity, for preventing further trouble or exposure, or mixed with apologies, in self-justification, or accompanied with murmuring at faithful reproof, are indications of the repentance not being "after a godly sort." Yet great allowance should be made for the capacity and manners of different persons in such circumstances. And in all cases, what seems deficient should be explained, and means used to produce what is wanting.

Repentance on the part of the offender, calls for forgiveness on the part of the offended; and this is not *optional* but *imperative*. "Take heed to yourselves, if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him," Luke xvii. 3. By this law, the offended is as much bound to profess forgiveness as the offender to profess repentance; and in this way only can the breach be healed to reconcilation, for the exercise of brotherly love, without which all labour and professions would be in vain.

Love thus restored should be maintained by dismissing from the mind, the offence, which, having been forgiven, should be "remembered no more," and never once mentioned in time to come. Any reference to an old offence that has been forgiven, is mean and dishonourable as well as unchristian,—is no better than charging over again an old account, that had been paid and discharged; and is a plain indication that, the person so acting, has not forgiven the offence, as God forgives sin, "remembering it no more." For promoting love, all that is "unseemly" should also be avoided, and the duties of love carefully performed, remembering that "love is fulfilling the law."

By repentance, sin, which impaired confidence, is removed, leaving the holy affections to operate as formerly. And, in a proper view of the case, there will be found cause to love his brother more, as the instrument of restoring his soul from sin to God; and the offended finding cause of greater love to his brother, as the fruit of his labours of love in reclaiming him. In this view, there is strong inducement to endeavour to heal the breach without other aid, as love so restored would be more genuine and fervent than what could be produced by the labours of "one or two more." And there is a noble triumph of grace in the offender being gained by the person he had injured, corresponding with what appears in Saul of Tarsus having being gained by Jesus whom he had persecuted.

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## TREATMENT OF AN OFFENCE BY "ONE OR TWO MORE."

In the event of the offender not being gained by hearing his brother, the offended party is required to take with him "one or two more." The object of this argument is twofold—that further private means may be used to restore the offender—and that, failing success, there may be legal evidence for establishing the truth of the case before the church,—the only tribunal competent for the exclusion of the offender, should he continue impenitent.

Those chosen for this purpose should be men of standing and sound experience—"wise men among the brethren, and, if otherwise suitable, the special friends of the offender, that, having his confidence, they may find easy access to his heart.

It merits particular notice here, that, the offended, is not commanded to go and *tell* the case to "one or two

more," but to "take" them first to the offender, which implies that, he must not say a word about the matter but in presence of the accused. Any previous or partial communication would be dishonourable—would indicate want of wisdom, candour, and love—might form a temptation to the mediators to prejudge the case, and if known to the offender, could not fail to produce a suspicion in his mind to that effect, which would unfit him for hearing them with advantage. They should hear nothing till the accuser and accused are face to face, when they should proceed in the order of the following principles :—

1. They should enter on their work under a deep sense of responsibility, reflecting how the interests of an immortal soul are at stake, anxious to save a soul from death, remembering how it is written, "He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord," and resolving to act as scripture law requires, depending on Christ for guidance and success.

2. After prayer for divine guidance, they should request the offended party to state the case, and the grounds on which he conceives the offender has not repented ; which should be followed by inquiry at the offender whether he consents to the truth of the statement, which if disputed to any extent, must be investigated for ascertaining how far what is in dispute is the effect of misunderstanding, or, whether any point not admitted can be established by circumstantial evidence, as no righteous judgment can be formed, but on the ground of facts proven by the admission of the accused, or legal evidence.

3. The offender should then be questioned as to his own view of the case, whether he conceives that the words or actions complained of accord with scripture law, and brotherly love, explaining to him how, in finding no law in justification of his conduct, he shews that, he "has been walking after the flesh, fulfilling the desires of his

own heart," and neither hearing nor obeying Christ; shewing him also the laws he has violated, recommending the wholesome appropriate prescriptions of scripture for producing repentence. But they should not rest satisfied with giving judgment on the case, as in civil matters, without finding the offender hearing them, by showing symptoms of true repentance, which may be sought by adjourned meetings, always conducted in the exercise of that love which "hopeth all things."

On occasions of this kind, there have been instances of the offender contriving to resist or avoid the treatment intended for his recovery, by recrimination, accusing his accuser, and demanding or hearing of what he had to say against him, as if intent to settle the account by making a balance of alleged injuries on both sides. But this law makes no provision for any thing of the kind, as was shewn in the following case:—An offender was found resisting the labours of agents employed to treat his offence, by loud and bitter complaints against his accuser, as having persecuted him, and spoken to him in a bad spirit; and a patient hearing of all he had to say against him was demanded; when it was said in reply, 'We cannot just now hear a word you have to say against your brother. We did not understand this as a case of personal quarrel, allowing a hearing of both parties. We were brought here to treat your case, not that of your accuser; and the law of Christ, under which we act, requires us to speak to you concerning your offence, apart from all other subjects. It is also written, 'Every man bear his own burden,' which forbids our mixing up cases that are distinct. Moreover, it would be wrong in you to advance, or us to sustain, what you might say against another in extenuating your sin. Nor can you form a proper judgment of the rebukes of your brother, till you see the evil of the sins he has rebuked. We must, therefore, proceed in the treatment of your case in the first instance, and

when disposed of, if you require, we shall be ready to hear what you have to say against your brother, after you have dealt with him in private, as the laws of Christ require, without effect.' When this offender was gained by repentance, instead of complaining against his brother, he thanked him cordially for his faithful dealing, confessing that he had hated reproof while in love with sin.

But, in treating a quarrel, both parties should be heard, and care taken to ascertain how the disputes originated, —who was the aggressor;—and how the minds of the parties have been affected;—whether as offending or being stumbled,—ministering counsel and rebuke accordingly;—taking care not to admit the faults on one side in extenuation of faults on the other, and without requiring confession on the one side, on condition of confession on the other, but showing how each must repent and confess and turn to God, as the proper basis of mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. And it should be shown, at the outset, how necessary it is, that each of the parties *desire reconciliation rather than victory*, and consent to that effect should be obtained; otherwise, all discussion would only promote strife, making the end worse than the beginning.

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## TREATMENT OF A PUBLIC OFFENCE.

An offence is public, when committed in circumstances which give occasion for its being reported and known in the world; and must be treated differently from a private offence, in respect of being at once submitted to the church for judgment, when the facts of the case are assertained so as to be "established in the mouth of two or three witnesses." A public, as well as a private offender, might be brought to repentance, by the blessing of God, on private treatment. But every public offender is

amenable to the church, because, by the publicity of his offence, they are rendered responsible for its removal,—because, being public, it is sin against the whole church, rendering them entitled to reparation,—and, because, though the offender were led to repentance by private means, the breach with the church, occasioned by his offence, could not be healed without confession before them, fitted to repair broken confidence. It is, therefore commanded,—"Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear," 1st Tim. v. 20. This must refer to public sins, as it is required, that private offences should be otherwise treated. Paul rebuked Peter before all the brethren on finding that the offence was public. Gal. ii. 14.

It is not lawful to tell unto the church what is reported against a member, and appoint two to investigate the case and report evidence, as in doing so, some things might be prematurely told, which could not be proven, to the injury of the accused, who should be held innocent till the true amount of his guilt is fully established. There is a positive law preventing any thing affecting character being told in the church, till after full investigation of the case, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established," 2nd Cor. xiii. 1. It is, therefore, the duty of any, who have heard evil reports against another, to investigate the case so as to be able to report with evidence. But, as all are not qualified for such work, and as, if left for all, it might be left undone, it has been advisable, in such cases, to inform the pastor, that he may appoint two to take a precognition, himself presiding, if practicable, for affording him more perfect knowledge of the case, in treating it before the church.

Those who take the precognition should beware of judging before the time. *Report* is not evident. In what is "commonly reported" there is reason for inquiry, but not for belief, till the facts of the case are ascertained by

careful and impartial investigation. And the accused is in duty bound to answer all questions suggested by the terms of the accusation against him. There is in the nature of the sacred compact, based on mutual recognition of relation to Christ, a binding obligation on each to answer all questions and afford all information necessary for preserving unimpaired the confidence of brotherly love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And such questions should be the more readily and cheerfully answered, as providing also for the vindication of the guiltless, on the principle of every church being "a city of refuge," for the protection of character; as has been found in instances of such investigation resulting in making a report to the church in vindication of the accused, on finding evidence that he had been accused falsely. It is, therefore, a *great privilege* to be subjected to such investigation, whether for the vindication of character, if falsely accused, or for the application of the means of recovery, if found guilty. In the proceedings of civil law, the accused is allowed the advantage of demanding proof, without being bound to answer any question to his own prejudice; because the end intended is punishment, from which he is allowed to escape if his guilt cannot otherwise be proven. But, as the end intended by scripture discipline is the recovery of the soul from moral disease, occasioned by sin, it is the *privilege* of the accused to answer any reasonable question, so as to prepare his brethren to prescribe for his recovery as much, and even more, than to answer the questions of his medical adviser for his guidance in prescribing for the healing of his body. There is abundance of scripture warrant for this, as in the example of God saying unto the woman, "What is this that thou hast done?" and in the example of his approved servant, who said unto Achan, "My son, give I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him, and tell me now what thou has done, hide it not from me;" which was

answered by a full account of what he had done, and of the bad state of his mind in doing it. Josh. vii. 14–21.

It is not unusual, on asking the accused concerning the truth of what is reported against him, to find him answering by the question. 'Who told you that?' and insisting on having the name of his accuser. Now, such a question should not be answered, for the following reasons:—1. The investigators are under no obligation to answer such a question. If any are so unrighteous as to believe public report without evidence, or so foolish as to accuse when they should inquire, they are, no doubt, bound to sustain the charge by proof. But there can be no obligation to give names or testimonies in conformation of what is only a *subject of inquiry*. 2. There is no need for any reference to those who have reported the case, except in the event of the accused denying what others are prepared to establish as truth; and in such a case, parties should be examined face to face. 3. There would be breach of confidence in giving the names of those who had made the communication for suggesting inquiry, and something very unwise, if not unjust, is subjecting *some* to blame for mentioning for a proper end, what was matter of common report among *many*. 4. The names of informants should also be withheld, as telling them might occasion strife and ill-will between them and the accused; and divert his mind from the proper consideration of his own sin, if guilty, preventing his being led to repentance.

But those engaged in the investigation, should beware of anything approaching to the spirit of the *far-famed Inquisition*. Any thing savouring of intent to *make out* a ground of charge against the accused, could not fail to produce injurious impressions, standing in the way of all that might be done to convince and reclaim. Nor is it necessary or seemly to dwell on all the little appendages of the case, as in "a count and reckoning" between man

and man, as on removing the root of the evil by repentance, reformation in all secondary matters will follow.

This implies, that inquiry after the nature of the offence should be conjoined with endeavours to produce repentance. Love cannot see sin without prescribing a remedy. It is by private treatment chiefly that offenders of every description are restored. And though, for reasons already explained, all public offences must be disposed of by the church, those who investigate for telling the offence unto the church, should endeavour to prepare the offender for making the confession of true repentance.

There have been instances of the accused admitting the facts, without seeing the sin of his conduct. In such cases, conviction may be produced by questioning the offender how he served God in the matter. An esteemed brother, after doing what the world would not much condemn, but what was at variance with the principles of his holy profession, defended his conduct by very plausible reasoning to one who said in reply, 'Did you do this, understanding that it was required by God, and for the purpose of pleasing him, or for pleasing yourself and your friends? I wish you first to answer this question to God in your closet, and when we meet again you will be better prepared to answer me.' On asking him at another meeting what he had been thinking of the matter, he answered, 'O, I have been thinking how thankful I should be, that I am now connected with brethren who care for my soul, and who will not suffer me to go astray without warning and rebuke. My answer to your important question is, that I had no sense of doing the will of God in the matter, but acted wholly from a desire to please my associates at the time, though at the hazard of displeasing my brethren. In this, therefore, I have greatly sinned; and having confessed my sin to Him who shews mercy, I reckon it my privilege to confess it to my brethren, that the stumbling-block may be removed.'

And having done so at a meeting of the church, some were heard afterwards saying, 'Have we not reason to love that dear brother more than ever?'

Instances also occur of the accused shewing bad temper when questioned about his faults. This arises from pride, the love of sin, and ignorance of the good intended by faithful dealing. But a well-instructed person, though impenitent, will seldom controvert those who question and rebuke his faults, knowing that it would be regarded as an indication of his being the brutish man who hateth reproof. And a penitent mind will not complain, though treated rather harshly. A good man, who was much broken and melted on account of having been "overtaken in a fault," was told (improperly) how some had been speaking harshly of his case, when he said in reply, 'Speak who will, or what they will, I should be silent and not complain, as their sin in doing so is the effect of my sin. Had I not sinned, they would not have had this occasion of stumbling.'

There have been also frequent instances of some threatening to leave the church, when called to account for their sins, as a way of escape from discipline—a dishonourable proceeding, to which no mind of common worldly honour will resort, though impenitent,—a course which men of common sense, without religion, will follow, knowing that the stigma arising from being marked as a run-away outlaw from fair trial, would be greater than what arises from exclusion. And should any, through ignorance, make the attempt, they should be shewn that it indicates a deficiency of love,—pride, in supposing themselves of such consequence that the church would suffer by their departure,—and impiety, in making terms by putting their own personal weight in the room of truth and argument. But, in the event of one going away in such circumstances, the investigators should report him as not hearing them; and on his refusing also to hear the church, they have full

warrant to put him away on that ground, and should do so, as removing all ground of temptation to others making a run-away escape from discipline.

It has been a question with some ill-instructed disciples, whether, on finding evil reports against a brother, he should not be requested to abstain from the LORD'S Supper till the matter is sifted and settled. But this indicates the absence of that love which "thinketh no evil," and of that just and honourable feeling which will sustain no charge against another, without proof. And, moreover, the proof of guilt in the case of one "overtaken in a fault," though *impairing*, does not in all instances so *destroy confidence* as to render fellowship in the LORD'S Supper impracticable; for, though having sinned, the offender may be on the way to repentance, "and love will give him space to repent," before deciding against him as confirmed in impenitence.

On finding no law to enforce exclusion from the LORD'S table, of the accused, but not tried, some have themselves withdrawn, especially when regarding themselves suffering by the alleged trespass. The following are the elements and tendencies of such conduct:—It is a premature proceeding,—judging and acting "before the time"—before trial. Evidence that a man has sinned, is no evidence that he has not repented, or that he will not repent when rebuked before the church. It is a presumptuous sin, in acting without law, and contrary to law—the man doing himself what cannot lawfully be done but by "the whole church." By withdrawing from the accused, the person who does so, in effect, separates him from himself, without the consent of the church, and in doing so, he also separates himself from the church—a proceeding which, if followed by the rest, would end in *church extinction!* The fact is, that any rash step of the kind indicates that the person so acting, has been *stumbled by the accusation*, and stands in need of the means of restoration as much as the accused, if found guilty.

## TREATMENT OF AN OFFENCE BY THE CHURCH.

Every church should be careful to understand and remember what errors must be avoided, and what principles must be acted upon, in order to their being prepared to treat offences, so as to produce the benefits intended.

Concerning the main source of errors to be avoided, Christ hath given warning by saying. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But *it shall not be so among you*," &c.—Mat. xx. 25, 26. It is here positively commanded not only that Christ's disciples shall not be ruled, in their religious concerns, by the "princes of the Gentiles," but also that *they shall not be ruled after their manner of ruling*; and, therefore, all proceedings of civil law, such as summons, libel, protest, and appeal, can have no place in the churches of Christ. As great evil has arisen from confounding church discipline with the proceedings of civil law, it is of much importance to mark the difference. The proceeding of civil law is a process of justice without mercy; but that of church discipline is one of love, regulated by scripture law. The one relates to the transgressor as a member of civil society; the other, to the offender as a member of the church of Christ. The one respects the trespass only in its relation to temporal interests; the other, treats it as affecting the interest of the soul. The end intended in the one case is, the punishment of the transgressor for enforcing restitution to the injured party; but the chief end contemplated in the other, is the restoration of the soul of the offender from the destroying power of sin. All proceedings, in the one case, are enforced by civil authority and power; but in the other, nothing is effected but by Bible truth and persuasion, rendered effectual by "the power of the LORD Jesus Christ." The bulk of misconception and trouble attending discipline in churches,

may be traced to the confounding of these distinct provinces of government; and hence the commands to Christians not to settle their disputes by civil law.—1st Cor. vi. 1—8.

When met to treat an offence, it will be well also to reflect on the view given at page 28th, of the constitution of a church as adapted to its government, to which may be added the following brief view of the special relation and respective provinces and powers of Pastor and People:—

1. The relation of Pastor and People, which is truly confidential, is constituted for maintaining the most endearing unity and co-operation in their being bound together by the perfect bond of love—love to Christ—love to the truth—and love to each other for the truth's sake dwelling in them, sustained by the constraining love of Christ.

2. Though in different departments of service, their relation is constituted for acting together in perfect concord, by subjection to Christ, and dependance on him common to both: and having no separate interests, but induced to cordial co-operation in promoting the great and good ends of their appointment, affording benefit to all concerned.

3. There is also strong inducement to cordial co-operation in the mutual dependance and advantage found in the ruling work of the Pastor providing for the orderly and efficient services of the People, and their obedience supporting the authority of the ruler, and giving effect to his government.

4. But, as it belongs to the Pastor to rule, and to the People to execute the law, there can be no intrusion by the People on what pertains to ruling, nor any attempt by the Pastor to execute the law apart from or independently of the People, without violation of the laws of the sacred compact. And as the respective powers of both consist only of right and obligation to act as scripture law re-

quires, any proceedings of "self-will" on the part of the Pastor, or of carnal policy contrary to law, on the part of the people, will hinder the wholesome working of the administration, and prevent the benefit intended.

But the main preparative of a church for the treatment of offences, is a proper sense of their relation to Christ, as subject to him, and depending on him in such services. Paul has given an abstract to this effect, where he says, "In the name of our LORD Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our LORD Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the LORD Jesus"—1st Cor. v. 4, 5. It is not enough that a church be "gathered together;" they must be met "in the name of Christ,"—drawn together in love and subjection to that name, having confidence in the efficacy of that name to give effect to their efforts in serving him. They must be "gathered together," recognizing Christ in their midst as Supreme Ruler sitting on his throne among them "to order and establish" them in all their procedure. Church discipline is properly speaking, a process of direct intercourse between Christ and his "body the church,"—the body speaking to him in prayer for all needful supply, and Christ speaking to them by Paul's "spirit" and the "spirit" of his other inspired servants in the scriptures. And it is by the Head thus acting upon the body, and the body acting in subjection to the Head, that Government is effective for good to all concerned, and for promoting the glory of Zion's King. It is also here shown, that the faith of the church must embrace "the power of the LORD Jesus Christ" as that only which can ensure success; being as necessary for the recovery of a backslider as for the conversion of the most hardened sinner.

In connection with holding the Supremacy of the Head, it will be profitable to keep in view the perfect equality

of the members of his body. "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." This forbids all attempts after such ascendancy as was rebuked by Christ, when found among his disciples, unfitting them for the kingdom of God. There have been instances of some of the Diotrephesian spirit, dealing largly in "good words and fair speeches," for the purpose of gaining the special confidence and regards of their brethren, that they might make them the dupes of their influence, and the props of their power, when grasping after the ends of their carnal ambition—men who have been a curse to the churches, and whose history is fitted to give effect to the solemn counsel, "Be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation"—James iii. 1. In Rom. xvi. 17, 18, the church is commanded to "avoid" those who "cause divisions and offences" by measures not conducing to the service of Christ, but to gratify their own fleshy minds in seeking ascendancy; and some, by giving countenance to those whom they are thus commanded to "avoid," have found ample experience of the bitterness of the fruits of neglecting this divine counsel.

Another principle of great importance to be remembered is, that, *when an offence is told unto the church, it is thereby placed beyond the personal interference of members individually; and no one is entitled to inquire or act for himself in the matter, apart from the church.* Each member is only *one of many*, and has no separate part or privilege for himself, and no right to attempt doing even a part of what is the work of "the whole church" when "gathered together." As one of the duties of *occasional fellowship*, it is lawful, and even commendable, for any member, on seeing the offender, to suggest what may tend to produce repentance, when guilt is proven before the church. But after this stage of the process, the offender is not bound to answer questions or make confessions to members individually. Nor can a member exact

anything of the kind, without violation of the order of Christ's house and government. It would not be more unlawful to attempt attending to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper apart from the church, than to attempt doing any part of the ordinance of church discipline apart from a church meeting, except as the acting agents of the church, by appointment. Nor is it lawful to make the case a subject of gossip tattle among private parties. Each member must hear evidence with the church, judge with the church, and execute the law with the church, when "gathered together." All must think and act as "one body" when "gathered together." This is the way of commanded duty—the way to serve Christ—and the way "to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,"—and any other plan can tend only to endless divisions.

The treatment of an offence by the church consists of three parts :—The establishment of the facts of the case before them by "two or three witnesses,"—the judgment of scripture law on the case by the Pastor,—and the execution of that law by "the whole church."

*The first part of the process* consists in establishing the facts of the case, which should be reported by the pastor, as the organ of all communications to the church, and certified by witnesses. On this head, it will be well to attend to the following rules :—

1. Before reporting the offence, the offender should have special previous notice, that his case will be told to the church at a given time, requesting his attendance, that he may not be taken unawares, but be prepared for what is intended.

2. The report should be *very brief*, comprising only the main facts which mark the guilt and impenitence of the offender, without any details of the former treatment of his case, which might lead to invidious comparison of gifts. It is evident, from the terms of Christ's law, "If he will not hear thee,"—"If he neglect to hear them,"—

"if he neglect to hear the church," that, the offended party, the "one or two more," and "the whole church," have each a voice, and a duty to perform to the offender, as he is found at the time, irrespective of one another. The case, therefore, should be told unto the church, avoiding all irrelevant matters, and all reference to the names or conduct of persons not connected with the church, though connected with the offence, (see 1st Cor. v. 12.) The details of David's sin, in the matter of Uriah, occupy a whole chapter; but Nathan's account of the guilt, in the application of his parable, is contained in three verses, 2nd Sam. xi. xii. 7, 8, 9. And other cases of alleged guilt were given, each in a single sentence, see John viii. 4; Acts. xi. 3; 1st Cor. v. 1. The law, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall *every word* be established," requires that NOT ONE WORD *should be uttered, but what the witnesses can establish in proof of the guilt of the accused.* The obvious and very important design of this, is to provide for the attention of the church being fixed exclusively to what constitutes the guilt of the accused, without being diverted or distracted by superfluous details, serving only to gratify a vain curiosity, and which on that account, also should be avoided.

3. The witnesses should be previously agreed as to the findings of their precognition, in order that, by bearing witness to the same facts in the same words, "every word may be established." And should there be any discrepancy of statement, that would leave the case not established, they should be dismissed with rebuke for such carelessness in a matter requiring so much accuracy; and others appointed to investigate and report correctly, as the meeting of the church is not the place for investigation—the church having nothing to do till facts are proven before them.

4. When the results of investigation have been certified before the church by the concurrent testimony of witnesses,

the accused should be asked whether he consents to the truth of what has been stated, or what he has to say to what has been witnessed against him. (Mat. xxvi. 62.)

He has an undoubted right to overturn it if he can, and should be heard fully in what he has to offer in the shape of exculpatory evidence; but should not be allowed to trouble the church with what has no bearing on the charges against him. Nor should it be understood, that the truth of what has been certified by witnesses is in the least affected by the denial of the accused, without other legal counter-evidence.

5. On finding no legal evidence to nullify the testimony of the witnesses, the facts certified by them should be regarded as "*established*," and the whole church thereby held bound to believe and act accordingly; giving no place to what may be otherwise said by the accused or by the world, or to the hearsay tales of weak and ill-instructed brethren, who may have rendered themselves proper subjects of rebuke for having allowed their minds to be impressed by any reports not confirmed by witnesses. The testimony of witnesses before the church is Christ's ordinance for establishing truth *to them*, and there is unrighteousness in a church presuming to act on any other kind of evidence. To take one step in discipline before the facts of the case are *established before the church, as scripture law requires, would be just as foolish as to begin to build a house without having laid the foundation.*

The establishment of the truth of an offence calls for relative feelings and exercises in the church, very different from what are found among the auditors of a court of justice. The church should be deeply humbled by the offence, as a sample of sin to which they are all liable, 1st Cor. v. 2;—grieved on account of the state of the fallen brother, 2nd Cor. ii. 4;—watching against being stumbled by the offence, 1st Cor. v. 8;—afraid lest, through erring in spirit or manner in the treatment of the case, the

offender should be further stumbled and hardened, rather than reclaimed—abounding in prayer for direction and success in the application of the prescribed remedy;—and cultivating such love to the offender, even in his fallen state, as will induce to perseverance in seeking to restore him. Though the confidence and complacency of love are unavoidably impaired by the offence, nothing should be allowed to impair the benevolence and compassion of love, which are required, on such occasions, to be in more lively exercise. David could have no complacency or confidence in Absalom when making war against him; yet, even then, the benevolent feeling towards him was such, that he could have died for him, 2nd Sam. xviii. 33. Christ also so loved offending rebellious sinners, that he *did* die for them; and it is by such love in a church towards offenders that they will reclaim and save them. There have been instances of some having shown no other feeling towards offenders than a wish to get rid of them. Such "know not what spirit they are of," nor how "the searcher of hearts" may regard them as in a worse state than the objects of their censorious contempt.

There should also be much searching of heart for ascertaining whether the main cause of the fall of the offender may not be found in the negligence of the church. It will not be known till the last day how far the faults of some will be charged to the account of others, not "looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." On a case of offence having been told to a church, one member said to another, when going home from the meeting, "That painful case told this evening, has brought my own sin to remembrance, and I am verily guilty concerning my brother, in having seen his exposure to temptation without having used the means to prevent his falling. The man is my neighbour, and I saw the danger to which he was exposed, without giving him warning. I saw symptoms of spiritual decay in his attending our week

evening meetings so seldom, and in holding too much intercourse with the men of the world, and my conscience told me that I should admonish him; but alas! I neither obeyed the voice of conscience nor the voice of Christ! It may be that, in the sight of God, I am more guilty than he, in the view of my negligence having permitted his sin.' This man, having been truly awakened, sought and found mercy, and then became instrumental in restoring him who had fallen through his negligence.

*The second part of the process*, is the judgment of scripture on the case by the Pastor, which should be preceded by special prayer of "the whole church" for "the spirit of judgment," with resolution to hear and obey Christ in the whole matter.

Judgment on the case, whether as pronounced by the Pastor, or adopted for execution by the People, should relate *exclusively* to the facts of the case established in evidence before the church, without any reference whatever to the offender's former character. The course of civil law admits of taking into consideration the previous character of the culprit, in mitigation of his punishment, on finding that he had formerly lived correctly; or, as shewing cause for inflicting the full penalty of the law, on finding him by "habit and repute," a worthless person, or old offender. But there is no place for such calculations in the spiritual administration, which awards no temporal reward or punishment, but aims after restoring the soul from the destroying power of sin. The law on this point is very explicit. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? *All his righteousness that he done shall not be mentioned:* in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die"—Ezek. xviii. 24. As all the previous wickedness of an unrighteous man must not be mentioned against him

to prevent his admission into a church when showing evidence of "repentance unto life," even so, all the good a man has done under a profession of godliness, though equal to the estimate given in Mat. vii. 22, must "*not be mentioned*" in his defence, when there is evidence in other parts of his conduct that "his heart is not right in the sight of God." Paul honoured this law by acting in strict accordance with its requirements, in rebuking Peter before all the brethren; when he neither taunted him with his former sin in having denied his Master, nor commended him for what had been otherwise praiseworthy in his service of that Master. Nor did he find in his gifts, attainments, or success, as an apostle, a claim of exemption from rebuke, when it was found that he was "to be blamed," (Gal. ii. 11–14),—a striking intimation that, in ministering rebuke, there must be "no respect of persons" and nothing said in commendation which might nullify the rebuke intended to convince of sin, and to produce repentance.

Attempts have been made to justify an opposite policy, by reference to the conduct of Christ in commending the churches of Asia, in so far as they had done well, before ministering the rebukes called for by their sins. But this is not in point. Christ's treatment of a church is not the rule of procedure in the treatment of an individual. As in a church, the members would not be alike guilty, it was only matter of justice to mention the good fruits of the preponderating influence of the more faithful, at one period, in connexion with the opposite fruits mainly chargeable against the agents of error and corruption, (see Rev. iii. 4.) There is no instance, however, of Christ conjoining commendation with rebuke to *an individual*, which would have been in violation of the law, "*All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned*," because it will be of no account with God. And those who have studied human nature, so as to understand how prone an

offender is to seek rest in a fair balance of good and evil in himself, rather than in the cross of Christ by repentance, will best see the importance of *total abstinence* from all "flattering words" tending to sustain that delusion.

In giving judgment, the first concern of the pastor should be to frame the style and order of what he says so as to *honour Christ*, by producing a deep impression among the people, that *He is present and over them as* SUPREME RULER, *and that they have to do with him, to hear and obey him in all things*;—the Pastor himself appearing not as a "Lord over God's heritage," but as the instrument of ruling power, and "serving the Lord with all humility of mind," by reading and expounding with application, the laws of the statute-book, as the rule of judgment; and commanding obedience in the name of his divine Master, as *present to enforce those laws by his own authority and power*. The main strength, or rather the whole proper strength, of pastoral rule, consists in thus giving proper place, prominence, and honour, to the "presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ," as "all in all," in giving effect to the administration. It is on these terms that Christ will be with a Pastor to work in him and by him, as the star of his right hand power. In thus honouring Christ, he will honour his servant with success, in terms of the saying,—"Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." And it has been found accordingly, that pastors who have excelled most in honouring Christ, as now explained have been most readily obeyed, and most "highly esteemed in love for their work's sake,"—the church also finding such rule most conductive to their own unity, peace, edification, and comfort.

The judgment of the Pastor should also be shewn so as to appear to be the judgment of Christ, else the people cannot receive it, "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God," nor can it "work effectually"

without being so received. Nothing should be advanced as matter of opinion, where the laws of Christ must be "all in all." There is no place in a Christian church for such language as *I think, I say, I am of this or that opinion, I like this,* or *I don't like that.* The church must be governed by divine law—not by human opinion, and therefore, "Thus saith the Lord," is the proper preface to all requirements to act in the name of Christ. Judgment should be pronounced, not as having been *formed* but *found,* by a fair application of the laws of Christ, and consisting with the fundamental principles of His government. Now, there are laws containing judgment on the nature of the case, and awarding the treatment to follow. The following texts contain lists of sins, concerning which it is said, that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"—Gal. v. 19–21; 1st Cor. v. 9–11, vi. 9, 10; Eph. v. 3–6. It is also shewn, in other passages, that want of love to Christ—1st Cor. xvi. 22;—want of love to the brethren—1st John iii. 14;—conformity to the world—1st John ii. 15;—covetousness—Col. iii. 5, 6;—unfruitfulness—John xv. 2; speaking falsehood—Rev. xxi. 27;—neglecting to hear Christ—Acts iii. 23; unbelief—Heb. iii. 19; and other sins, mark their subjects as having no part in Christ, except they repent. Now, no wise pastor will allow any case to be brought before the church as an offence, but what calls for exclusion, if not repented of; and this makes the rule of judgment as to the disposal of all cases, plain and easy to be understood. Unlike the complex plan of human government, awarding a great variety of punishments to a corresponding variety of crimes, the divine plan is one of beautiful simplicity in subjecting all cases to one of two classes of laws—to the law "If he repent forgive him"—or, if continuing in wickedness, to the law, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," or other laws to the same effect, as in Mat. xviii. 17; 1st Cor. v. 5, 7.

But before giving judgment, the Pastor must first decide as to the general character of the case—whether, as being that of one "overtaken in a fault," requiring previous rebuke for producing repentance, or, that of a course of sin discovered, indicating confirmed hypocrisy, calling for immediate exclusion.

The law, in the last view, is very explicit. It is commanded, "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven," in obedience to which, the church at Corinth at once excluded the "wicked person," without any other means to produce repentance. The reason of this arrangement is obvious in the nature of the case. Any profession of repentance from one who has long practised hypocrisy, can have no claim to credit or the confidence of the church. In finding evidence in a discovery of long continuance in sin, that the offender is not of "of the truth," but "of the world," the church is bound, in consistency, to "count" and treat him accordingly,—not counting him even a fallen brother, but counting him as he really is, "an heathen man and a publican." In such a case, exclusion is the most suitable means for producing repentance; as retaining him in the church would only support his delusion in thinking himself a Christian, while his works testify against him; but in separating him to the world, there would be a tendency to awaken him to repentance.

Some have contended, however, that such offenders should be retained in the church on *probation*, though *suspended from the Lord's Supper for a time*, alleging that exclusion is a cruel proceeding, not to be resorted to but in the event of all other means having failed of success. But this is founded on erroneous views of the nature of excommunication, which is not a cruel but merciful proceeding, intended for "the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." It is, therefore, rather a cruel proceeding to substitute in its stead what God never appointed, and what, of course,

he cannot bless for good to souls. The *suspension plan* is anti-scriptural,—is the offspring of carnal policy, indicating more zeal for *bulk* than for *purity*, and leads to gross inconsistency. No scriptural church would receive on probation those whose hypocrisy had been made manifest, and therefore, cannot, consistently, retain such characters. Simon Magus was numbered with the disciples by baptism, on professing his faith in Christ, but when it appeared from the words of his mouth, that his "heart was not right in the sight of God," he was, in effect, instantly excluded, by being told, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." And no church can retain a known hypocrite, without thereby placing themselves in the position of those churches, to whom Christ said, "I have somewhat against thee."

Immediate exclusion is also required, on finding the offender uttering falsehood for covering his sins, when questioned about the nature and extent of his offence, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, mentioned in Acts v. 1—11. The confession of one who has been uttering a falsehood, has no claim to credit, and his immediate exclusion will be matter of salutary warning to all to speak the truth,—the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, when questioned about their faults.

But a different treatment is required in the case of one "overtaken in a fault." In such a case the offender should be rebuked by the Pastor, as the organ of the church, shewing him the nature and effects of his sin, the state of mind indicated by it, and the appropriate prescriptions of Scripture for producing repentance. This rebuke should be regarded by the offender as the voice of "the whole church," testifying against his sin, and speaking to him in the name of Christ, to repent and turn to God; or rather the voice of Christ, spoken by his body, the church, which he is commanded to hear, and in reference to which it is commanded, "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as

an heathen man and a publican." Nor is it enough that the offender *stand the rebuke*, as some would say. There must be *evidence of repentance*, in order to his being restored to the confidence of the church. Should he fail to respond to rebuke by confession of sin, he is thereby given to understand that his brethren have "somewhat against him," and to this applies the law, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Mat. v. 23, 24. This law should be read by the Pastor, before the church, to every offender who does not respond to rebuke by the confession of sin, explaining to him how it shews that his gifts cannot be accepted, how his prayers cannot be answered, and how, by this law, he is excluded from the Lord's table, till he is reconciled to his offended brethren, by repentance, shewn in the free confession of sin. This will be found a powerful means of awakening to repentance. And in giving the offender a little "space to repent," it should be understood that those who brought forward his case, and therefore know it best, should confer with him in private, for engendering a better spirit—who will, thereby, be fitted to report to the church, for their guidance in what may follow. But as discipline is intended for the benefit of the offender, his presence should be required in all that is done—the church abstaining from decree or execution, in absence, except when absent refusing to hear them.

At this stage of the process, it will be well to call to remembrance the reasons which render the confession of sin so imperative and indispensable.

(1.) It is essential to genuine repentance in the offender, and to his obtaining pardon and acceptance with God. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso *confesseth* and forsaketh them, findeth (shall have) mercy," Prov. xxviii. 13. "If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful

and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1st John i. 9. Nor is it enough that sin be confessed to God. It must also be confessed to all who have been affected by knowing it, according to the rule, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed," James v. 16. The law in Mat. v. 23, 24, already quoted, shews that there can be no acceptance with God, even at the altar, without reconciliation to brethren by the confession of sin. God will not regard any as reconciled to himself, who are at variance with his church; and so it will be found at the last day.

(2.) The confession of sin, as indicating true repentance in the offender, is essential to repair broken confidence, so as the church may "confirm their love towards him," 2nd Cor. ii. 8.

(3.) The confession of sin is also required, as a tribute of honour to public justice. Where the law and the Law-giver have been dishonoured by the transgression of the law, it is right that both be honoured by confession that God is righteous, and that the transgressor hath done wickedly. It was on this principle that Joshua demanded confession when he said, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him," Josh. vii. 19. The main end is wanting where this is not uppermost in the thoughts of pastor and people, as well as offender, in seeking and receiving the confession of sin.

*The third part of church discipline* is the execution of scriptural law by "the whole church," having previously found that the law has been applied by the pastor according to the will of Christ. And if any are not so convinced, the burden of proof respecting the misapplication of law, rests with the objector, who should remember that it will not do to say that he is not satisfied, without explaining the grounds of his difficulty, and shewing from the scrip-

tures what he reckons the more obvious rule of duty. He should also inquire whether his halting is not the result of ignorance of principles, or of self-conceit, or of a factious spirit, or of some leaning to the extremes of laxity or severity, or of sympathy with the offender, arising from indulging in the same or other sins. And to prevent exposure of himself, and trouble to the church, he should *ask delay*, that, having time to confer with God and others about the state of his mind, he may be better prepared to form a correct scriptural judgment. A prudent brother, in such circumstances, asked delay, that he might have time to consider, and at another meeting of the church, he spoke to the following effect ;—'By conversation with our esteemed pastor, I now see that my difficulty in the case before us arose from confounding things that are distinct, and I am now prepared to act in the matter. Had I rashly given utterance to my thoughts at last meeting, the pride of my heart might have led me to defend them so as to occasion unseemly contention, or my views might have been an occasion of stumbling to others as ignorant as myself, and the premature statement of them might have borne an appearance of opposition to our pastor, whose authority we are all bound to support. But by the more prudent course I have taken, these evils have been prevented, and the confidence of love maintained. I mention this, that my brethren may benefit by my experience in this mattter.'

This plan of delay for preparative inquiry is required by scripture law. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God." Ecc. v. 2. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings," Phil. ii. 14. All the scripture instructions relating to the treatment of offences, shew that nothing should be stated in the church without previous preparation by private intercourse with those concerned in what may be stated. Nor should any question be asked in the

church that can be answered "at home." 1st Cor. xiv. 35.

The style of these laws evidently imply that there should be little or no discussion in the church; and, therefore, the pastor should never give rise to discussion, by asking the church to state their opinion, and say what should be done. This would amount to a transfer of his pastoral rule to the people, and might lead to "perverse disputings," more in the spirit of democratic legislation than of christian obedience, tending to form and foster an impression of the proceedings of the church being the results of their own will rather than of the influence of Bible truth. Instead of asking the church what should be done, the pastor should teach them, in all things, *what Christ commands them to do*, asking no questions but whether they are so convinced as to be ready to obey.

On corresponding grounds, *the plan of deciding any matter by a majority of votes, is utterly inadmissible in a christian church.* Such a proceeding is both lawful and necessary, as a principle of political expediency, in adjusting differences among the men of the world, in matters affecting their temporal interests, but can have no place in executing the laws of Christ in the church. No man acquainted with mind, and understanding the nature of the obedience required by Christ, can for a moment suppose that it can be promoted by a manifestation of the judgment of others, without a corresponding conviction of the demands of the divine law, on the part of those who are required to obey. Were the number of voters admitted as the test of truth, it would give to the adherents of Popery the advantage of deciding their claims by an overwhelming majority. Ruling by a majority of votes would amount to placing the judgment of the majority in the room of the laws of Christ; and the numerical power of the majority in the room of His authority and power; rendering the few subject to the many, rather

than to Christ; leaving the high prerogatives of mind to be disposed of as the men of the world dispose of their temporalities, and causing the offender to regard his case as determined by the will of men rather than by the laws of Christ. The voting system is prohibited by those laws which require a church to be of one mind in serving Christ; so as they cannot act till they are prepared to "serve the Lord with one consent." See 1st Cor. i. 10—Phil. ii. 2, and iii. 16.

The proper security against divisions, is hearing Christ in all things. By hearing the "one Master," the people are led to "serve him with one consent;" but by neglecting to hear him, place is given for the will of men; and as among many men there are many minds, divisions naturally follow. By good government on the part of the the pastor, and a competent knowledge of principles among the people, there will be such ready recognition of the rules of duty in every successive step of discipline, that divisions will be of rare occurrence, and easily healed. But for maintaining concord, all must be "skilful in the word of righteousness." The people though well instructed, might soon be put into confusion by the reckless proceedings of a pastor not qualified to "rule well;" and the best ruling would be lost on a people not "instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." The pastor who leaves his people in ignorance of this subject, may look for a coming "day of trouble and rebuke," when he may read his sin in its punishment found in the divisions resulting from his neglect of duty;—or, though finding peace for a time in the calm of ignorance, "a worse thing may befal him," if, when giving in his account at the last day, he is found chargeable with what has been wanting in the social obedience of his people, in not having laboured, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, so as to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

In order to "serve the Lord with one consent" in their discipline, a church should be well instructed concerning the causes of division, so as to know how to avoid them. Differences of opinion in the execution of law, have been traced to the following causes :—

(1.) *Confounding church discipline with the proceedings of civil law,* inducing the ill instructed, influenced by a false charity, to advocate deliverance from discipline as from temporal punishment. This is generally the root of all demurrage on the part of those who do not see clearly the difference between the iron rod of human government, and "the yoke of Christ."

(2.) *Confounding the case of one "overtaken in a fault" with that of detected hypocrisy,* has been the occasion of some stumbling, by supposing the treatment in the one case being applicable also to the other.

(3.) *Confounding legal evidence and public report.* A case which had occasioned much public clamour was before a church, when some refused to act, alleging that what had been witnessed before the church was far short of what was reported in the world. This was met by shewing that scripture law allows nothing that is reported in the world to be told before the church, but in so far as "every word can be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses,"—that all that could be proven in that case had been told, and so established,—and that if any thing more could be proven, those having evidence should bring it forward, or not listen to unfounded clamour. When they heard these things they were content and acted with the church on the ground of evidence before them. When there is clear evidence of hypocrisy in the discovery of one having continued for a time in the practice of any sin, there is no "need for any further witness," and therefore, no occasion for expending time and labour on any further inquiry. Nor is it seemly to follow after all reports

as if intent to make the accused appear as black and bad as possible.

(4.) *Misconception of character and of the application of law.* One was found urging the adoption of his own opinions, which he held *without any reference to their having been founded on the word of Christ*, and on this evidence, that he was not "hearing Christ," but "walking after his own thoughts," it was proposed that he should be excluded, as commanded in Acts iii. 23, when some objected on the ground of the man's former good character, alleging also that he had done nothing that could be condemned even by the world. But on shewing how the righteousness of a man must not be mentioned when he commits iniquity (Ezek. xviii. 24),—how a man may be without reproach in the world and also without an interest in Christ,—and how neglecting to hear Christ, is evidence of having no part in him, and therefore a proper ground for exclusion;—on seeing these things they became ashamed of their objections, and took part in commanded duty.

(5.) *Respect of persons.* On delay being asked in another case, it was found that the objectors were relatives of the offender, wishing for him a more lenient treatment than scripture law admits. In order to correct their error, they were asked whether they expected the church would be guided by their wishes more than by the laws of Christ? —whether true christian love to their friend would not rather lead them to take part in doing what Christ had commanded for restoring him by repentance?—and whether they recollected how, by the law of Moses, the nearest relatives were required to be first in executing the law on offenders? Deut. xiii. 6—10. On finding no answers to these questions, they received and obeyed the truth.

(6.) *Gossip tattle.* A woman, who by "good words and fair speeches" had "crept in unawares," was found ripe for exclusion. But delay was requested, when it was

found that some objected from having given heed to her plausible tales in private, against her accusers, in her own defence. On finding, however, by a comparison of statements, that she had dissembled, and on seeing that a church is bound to act on evidence brought before them by faithful witnesses, the objectors expressed regret for having listened to tales contrary to law, and readily acted with the church according to law.

(7.) *Carnal sympathy with the offender.* A person was found ripe for exclusion on account of various defections and sins, bearing evidence that "his heart was not right in the sight of God," though chargeable with no gross sin, when one requested delay, saying, that he knew sundries who were not yet prepared to take part in his exclusion. When questioned as to the grounds of objection, they expressed themselves in very indefinite terms, pointing at some things of which he stood accused as being *no great sins* in a manner which indicated the lurking of that feeling which led some of old to say, "Thus saying, thou reproachest us also." This led to faithful dealing, questioning them whether it was their opinion that continuing in such sins as they called *little* consisted with living by faith in Christ, and whether the defence they had offered consisted with themselves being blameless in these respects, or whether it did not give cause to infer that they were themselves prepared to do what they could defend in another? This salutary rebuke produced repentance.

(8.) *The compulsory spirit, seeking ascendency.* A woman was recommended for admission into a church by a wealthy deacon, and was rejected on the ground of some things in her conduct rendering doubtful the sincerity of her profession. But the influential deacon feeling hurt at his counsel having been rejected, soon shewed the weight of his tail, in more than a dozen supporting him in urging compliance with his demand. It was in vain that they were told that their views could be no rule of duty to

others without corresponding conviction. They had all been previously trained in compulsory churches, and had taken with them the old leaven of compulsory policy, and being, consequently, strangers to scripture forbearance, and what is necessary for "keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," on finding that their brethren would not "give place by subjection to them," they separated themselves, and after continuing for a time together, they "came to nought." The compulsory and voluntary principles cannot be wrought together. Men must be wholly slaves, or wholly free—entirely subject to the will of man in some form or other, or at perfect liberty to act as knowing the will of Christ in all things.

(9.) *Bad government.* A pastor of decided piety, who was neither "self-willed" nor "soon angry," but wanting in the knowledge of the first principles of scriptural government, was accustomed to request his people to speak their mind on every case of offence before the church, and to decide by a majority of votes, by which he rendered his church so fruitful in divisions, that dozens and scores left occasionally as consequences of what produced vain disputation instead of obedience to Christ. On the other hand, there are churches in Scotland, which, during the whole period of their social existence of ten, twenty, or thirty years, have disposed of all the offences which have arisen among them with harmonious comfort, without divisions and without a jar, in consequence of having been trained to learn of Christ and to obey him in all things; and where divisions occur, the cause is not in any defect of the scripture plan of government, which is perfect, but in want of a competent knowledge of that plan, or want of moral capacity to work it.

In providing for "keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," when attending to discipline, it is further necessary that all the members of the church should understand and feel the obligation resting on them

to execute the laws faithfully, and with one accord in subjection to Christ. When the pastor has pronounced the judgment of scripture law on a case, he has done his duty, and has delivered his soul. But awful responsibility rests on the church in relation to the execution of that judgment, the neglect of which comprises the following sins and tendencies to evil :—

(1.) In Christ having conferred *great honour* upon His people by constituting them His body to reign with Himself as "kings and priests unto God" in executing His laws, their guilt is the greater in the return of *dishonour to Him*, by refusing to execute his judgment in the church.

(2.) Those who refuse to obey scriptural judgment, thereby show that they are not under law to Christ, which is further manifest by finding, in all such cases, that the objectors do not refer to any other scripture law as the rule of judgment, but speak the language of their feelings, passions, and prejudices; thus showing that they are "walking after their own thoughts," and not hearing Christ. *Now, there is no religion whatever in thoughts, resolutions, or works, not formed and regulated by the word of Christ;* and hence there have been instances of persons having been excluded from the church, in terms of the law, in Acts iii. 22, 23, on the ground of their showing evidence of not hearing Christ by their continued opposition to the execution of his laws.

(3.) There is rebellion against Christ in seeking to fulfil the thoughts and desires of the heart in preference to his laws—rebellion of the most daring description in resisting his government in the church! and in effect attempting to overturn that government, by endeavours to induce the church to execute the desires of an erring mortal, rather than the laws of heaven!

(4.) Such conduct tends also to the ruin of the soul of the offender. Though no doubt intended as a special act

of favour, to shield him from the rod of discipline and from the pain of excision, *these "tender mercies are cruelty," as providing for sparing the sins which will destroy the soul.* This is God's account of the matter where He complains of those who "strengthen the hands of the wicked, that he should not turn from his wicked way, *by promising him life,*" Ezek. xiii. 22. There is no act of cruelty equal to that of the soul-murder perpetrated by those who aid the offender in deceiving himself by thinking that he may live without repentance unto life,—defending him in the sins which will destroy his soul, except he repent! Some have been heard complaining of rebuke tendered to others, as having been more than flesh and blood could endure. But rebuke is intended for "the destruction of the flesh," which must be probed to the bottom and laid open, so as to make way for purging and healing by the balm of Gilead; and those who cannot or will not understand this, are "not fit for the kingdom of God." It is a remarkable fact, that the primitive churches, though accused of laxity, were not charged with severity of discipline; and, in doubtful cases, the way to lean to mercy's side is to follow the law of exclusion, as there is danger of deceiving the soul of the offender by retaining him without satisfactory evidence of repentance, but no hazard whatever in doing *what is intended to produce repentance,* as, in the event of that effect being produced, he can be restored to church fellowship.

(5.) It is plainly taught in scripture, that Christ will punish the neglect of the execution of his laws, by "terrible things in righteousness." When a church long neglects the duty of "purging out the old leaven," he will take the work into his own hands, and purge or consume that church by his righteous judgments. He gave intimation to this effect where it is written, "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against

them with the sword of my mouth," Rev. ii. 16. This evidently signifies his purpose to do more than speaking to them by his word, as in this epistle. As this "sword of his mouth" is that by which he "smites the nations," (Rev. xix. 15,) the threatened application of it, to "fight against them," implies a purpose to deal with the rebellious church as he deals with the "nations" by righteous judgments, to scatter or consume them in his anger. On this principle did God purge his church when neglecting to purge themselves, as shown in Num. xvi., and other parts of scripture. And though he has permitted the churches of anti-christian constitution to have long standing and prosperity, though wholly neglecting his law, he will not suffer churches of scriptural order to pass unpunished. When neglecting his law, he will subject them to judgments by which they will be either purged or consumed—scattered, or left to "pine away in their iniquities."

In treating the case of one overtaken in a fault, on finding satisfactory evidence of repentance, it is the duty of the church to forgive the offender, to restore him to their confidence and love, and to signify the same to him, so as what was "lame and turned out of the way may be healed." But an impenitent offender has no right to prolong discussion in defence of his sin. When the record of evidence against him is closed, and the judgment of the church given in rebuke, *he has no claim on being further heard but in confessing his sin.* In such circumstances, it is not required that the church hear the offender, but that he should hear the church, and respond to their rebuke by confession. Nor is any one entitled to be heard in defence of his erroneous opinions in leaving a church. None have a right to teach publicly, without appointment of the church, who are responsible for the doctrine and conduct of its members—Acts xiii. 2. And in having a law to "charge some that they teach no

other doctrine," (1st Tim. i. 3,) it would seem strange, indeed, were they held bound to hear whatever doctrine any backsliding member might feel disposed to teach in the church, and though positively commanded not to receive false teachers into their houses!—2nd John v. 10. The gainsaying of solemn rebuke in the church, is, indeed, of very rare occurrence, being the attainment only of those who "despise government, being presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities," 2nd Pet. ii. 10. But there have been some instances of very proud offenders endeavouring to prolong discussion in their own defence when called upon to confess sin,—partly that they might give vent to the spleen of wounded pride, and also that they might *make occasion* for complaining of being unjustly treated by the church, in refusing to hear them. Those are the "unruly and vain talkers, whose mouths must be stopped" by exclusion. The impenitent seldom admit the justice of their treatment, and generally make the Pastor the butt of their vituperation, as did the Jews in the wilderness, who, under all their troubles, "murmured against Moses and Aaron;" and on one occasion murmured against them saying, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord"—always blaming their leaders for what were the fruits of their own sins: but this is no good reason for a church giving place to strife, or delaying duty, in not excluding impenitent offenders.

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## EXCOMMUNICATION.

This solemn service consists in the separation of an impenitent offender from the church; not on account of his having committed a particular sin, but because he has not repented, and on finding that his case, as a whole, affords evidence of his having no part in the kingdom of God. This is evident from the commands, "Put away from

among yourselves *that wicked person*"—"Let him be unto thee as *an heathen man and a publican.*" Such laws should be read and applied by the Pastor, calling on the church to obey, by a show of hands signifying their concurrence, while he declares the separation by saying, 'In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we put away this person from among us;' followed with prayer for the blessing of God on what has been done in the name of Christ.

This is called "punishment inflicted by many," being the deed of "the whole church," 2nd Cor. ii. 6. The original word signifies punishment, by rebuke in this case, consisting of open protestation against sin, in the exclusion of the impenitent offender. But the text affords no warrant for the infliction of pains and penalties affecting the relations of civil life. A man may be a respectable member of civil society, though he has no part in the kingdom of God.

The command—"to deliver such an one unto Satan," means nothing more than to "count him an heathen man and a publican," by separating him from the church to the world, over which Satan presides. By joining a church, a man professes to be "turned from the power of Satan to God," and by separation from the church he is "delivered to Satan" by being turned back to Satan's kingdom, which is of this world, and no longer connected with the kingdom of Christ.

But this is not intended for destruction but for salvation—"for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." This is Christ's ordinance for awakening the offender to repentance, that he may be saved, and should be attended to by the church for that end, not with vindictive feeling, but in love, and with much prayer, that the end may be gained as in the case at Corinth. Being the testimony of "the whole church," as God's witnesses, that the excluded hath no part in the kingdom of God, and a sign of his open

separation from that kingdom, at the last day, except he repent, it is well fitted to awaken him to a true sense of his condition, and should be so explained for that end.

The act of excommunication by the church is also a practical manifestation "that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world," and a solemn sign of the separation of the wicked from the just at the last day. And while, in this view, it is an impressive warning sign to the world, it is intended also to act upon the church, so as "all may hear and fear, and do no such wickedness." By putting away an obstinate offender, they are laid under additional obligation to put away their own sins; and every one who thinketh he standeth, is warned to take heed lest he fall, and to watch and pray lest he enter into temptation.

In reference to this solemn service, Christ hath said, "Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," Mat. xviii. 18. The plain import of this is, that whatsoever is done in the name of Christ and according to his word in the church on earth, will be ratified in heaven, and held binding on all concerned, making the excluded offender "bound" over to Satan without escape but by repentance, and binding all other churches not to receive him without making reparation for the offence which had caused his exclusion. No church having respect for their own character, and for the order and ends of christian government, will receive one who has been a run-away from discipline, or who has been excluded from another church, till he "go his way and first be reconciled" to those who have "somewhat against him," as commanded in Mat. v. 24; knowing that on no other terms will God receive him.

Regarding the subsequent treatment of the excluded, there is a law in 1st Cor. v. 9–11, commanding the church to avoid his company more than that of the world. This

is required:—1. For giving full effect to the separation in what is occasional as well as stated fellowship. 2. He must be avoided as an occasion of temptation, lest others be corrupted by him, 1st Cor. v. 6. 3. They must keep no company with him, to shew that they regard him as none of them, but an unbeliever; which is the more necessary as many in such circumstances think and speak of themselves as christians, though declared by exclusion as having no part in Christ. They must keep no company with him that he may be ashamed, and that by such expressions of disapprobation, he may be awakened to repentance. This plan is further recommended by the example of God himself, who withdraws from backsliders, till they repent. "I will go and return to my place till they *acknowledge their offence.* In their affliction they will seek me early." Hos. v. 15. On this branch of the subject, the talented *Author of Jethro* says, "Much ignorance of this great scripture rule, of its wondrous adaptation to bind and control the stubborn heart of man, and much spurious, so-called, christian charity, prevail upon the subject, to the great detriment of the cause of God. The power of discipline greatly lies in the *indignation of an unanimous multitude.* Every one of that multitude must act a part, as they act together; the erring brother must see nothing but a compassionate frown in every face, and hear nothing but a faithful rebuke and admonition from every tongue. He must find no rest to his soul—not one drop of comfort till he repent, and be restored to the favour of God and his church! Paul commands every believer, "with such an one not to eat," —"*withdraw* yourselves,"—"*have no company* with him, that he may be ashamed." Do all this;—do it resolutely. It is the greatest benevolence, the truest love. It is, in fact, the counterpart of the Saviour's own frown. It is really through his people that he imparts the impressions of his mind; his church ought, therefore, as a mirror, to

reflect his image,—his frown as well as his smile. It is a lamentable fact, that multitudes of members are either ignorant or negligent respecting this momentous duty. They sin, and call it charity! They are really cruel under pretence of kindness! They counteract discipline, and virtually conspire against the authority of Christ, and resist the operation of his laws; they set at nought the voice of the church, and prevent the infliction of its sentence; they harden the offender in his sins, and neutralize the means intended to bring him to repentance!"

But the law in question is not intended to act as an infringement on the ordinary and lawful intercourse of domestic and social life. Nor is it intended to prevent intercourse for leading the impenitent to repentance. It is the bounden duty of christians to seek the good results of exclusion, by occasional endeavours to restore what has been cut off or gone astray. Ezek. xxxiv. 6, 8; Luke xv. 3–7; 2nd Cor. ii. 6–8; James v. 19, 20.

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## DUTIES OF CHURCHES TO EACH OTHER AND TO THE WORLD.

It was said unto the churches of Galatia, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 28,—and this *oneness* in Christ is common to all scriptural churches, and is the proper basis of their occasional fellowship. The duties of the fellowship of churches are—to maintain the intercourse of brotherly love by letters or messengers—1st Cor. xvi. 3; 2nd Cor. viii. 23;—to receive each other's members by "letters of commendation," Rom. xvi. 1;—to afford the benefit of teaching gifts in time of need, as when the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch, Acts xi. 22;—to minister temporal supplies when needed, as when the Gentile churches made "a certain contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem," Rom. xv. 26;—to

endeavour to correct what is wrong in each other's faith, order, or practice, as in the case which led the church at Antioch to send a deputation to the church at Jerusalem, Acts xv.;—and to co-operate in extending the cause of Christ, as did all the primitive churches.

The fellowship of churches also appears in the occasional visits of pastors and members from one church to another, arising from the calls of Providence in their journeyings. As a member of "the household of faith," every disciple finds a home in every dwelling-place of Zion where he may sojourn for a time, and is entitled to take his place and part in every ordinance, the same as where he statedly resides.

The right or obligation of one or more churches to endeavour to correct an erring church, is found in the nature of their relation, confirmed by scripture example. In the view of the confidence of brotherly love being the basis of fellowship among churches, as well as among believers in one church, there is the same reason for removing what impairs that confidence in the one case as in the other. Every church is entitled to see, that the churches with which they hold fellowship are not violating the terms of compact. Nor can any church wink at the known faults of another church, without thereby becoming "partakers of their sins." The example of the church at Antioch, in sending a deputation to the church at Jerusalem, under an impression that that church had been leavened by "certain who went out from them, and troubled others, subverting their souls," is a rule of binding obligation to all churches to act on the same principle, as occasions require,—not waiting, in all cases, till they are sought or their advice required, but sending agents for inquiry and counsel, on hearing of continued troubles.

If it is asked, how such interference consists with the independency of churches, it might as well be asked, how the treatment of offences in any church consists with reli-

gious liberty? Every scriptural church is independent in respect of being subject to no foreign judicatory acting apart from the churches, in their government, but not independent of the aids of sister churches. Nor can any scriptural effort to correct the faults of a church, in any degree impair their spiritual independence.

It may be further alleged, that the lawfulness of such interference does not consist with the fact, that Christ commanded each of the erring churches of Asia to repent of their sins, without requiring the one to interfere with the other for promoting reformation. To this it can be readily answered, that Christ also commands every erring disciple to repent; but it cannot be inferred from this, that others are not bound to endeavour to reclaim an offender, on seeing him neglecting to hear Christ. Every church is commanded to "amend their ways," by hearing Christ speaking to them in his word; and it is only in the event of their not hearing him, that neighbouring churches should interfere to produce repentance.

This can be done only by deputation of messengers sent to the erring church,—not, however, as armed with power to conquer, but inspired with wisdom and love to persuade and win,—not as a church court standing in the place of Christ to "enact and ordain," but as fellow-subjects of the same Lord, showing, with all humility and meekness, the requirements of divine law for convincing of sin, and the prescriptions of grace for producing repentance;—always commencing by inquiry, and proceeding with such appropriate application of principles as the development of circumstances may suggest, looking to Christ for guidance and success.

It has been a question, in such cases, whether the ends intended could not be gained by written advice, without a personal deputation. But it is impossible to form a correct judgment of what pertains to mind, without being on the spot, hearing the words, and observing the temper of

all concerned. No wise medical practitioner would prescribe without feeling the pulse of his patient, and carefully observing the symptoms that mark the character of the disease; nor can the man of God prescribe for recovery from moral disease, without observing what is necessary to guide him in speaking "a word in due season." But the main aim of such a deputation should be to awaken and lead the church to direct intercourse with Christ himself about their condition, as the only way by which they can be convinced of sin, purged and healed, as in the following instance:—

On hearing of discord in a church, about their pastor, who was one of the most blameless of men, two neighbouring churches sent a deputation of their pastors to inquire and do their best to promote healing, promising to sustain them in the work by their prayers. On finding how matters stood, this deputation proposed that the church should set apart a day of fasting and humiliation for special prayer, that God might shew them what sins were the causes of their troubles, and promote healing by repentance. To this the church consented, and after spending the greater part of the day in prayer, and reading such portions of Scripture as seemed to bear on the case, with occasional remarks; one of the ministers remarked, that as there had been much prayer that God would shew sin, it would be desirable to find prayer answered in the confession of sin,—requesting any who were conscious of having sinned in the matter, to come forward and confess their sin. This was followed by a member standing up, who said, that he had been speaking to others, who, like himself, were convinced that they had treated their pastor harshly, for which they were very sorry; and it was proposed, by way of making restitution, to give to their pastor a written note, certifying, in cordial terms, their approbation of his doctrine and manner of life, which, having been proposed, and signed by the deacons in the

name of the church, the business was ended with exhortation, thanksgiving, and prayer. Various other instances might be mentioned to shew, that correcting the errors of churches by such means, is no new or rare thing among Independents in Scotland.

In the event of an erring church not being reclaimed by such means, and found not having Christ, but "walking after their own thoughts," it becomes the duty of the churches, whose scriptural counsel they would not receive, to "turn away from them," as commanded in 2nd Tim. iii. 5, and to report cause in evidence to the rest of the churches, that they may do so likewise. In this way will the candle-stick, refusing to repent, be "removed out of its place," as the Lord hath spoken,—not by removing the people out of their locality, but from their place among "the golden candlesticks," or churches, owned by Christ as subject to his government, by the rest of the churches refusing to hold fellowship with them till they repent. In Acts xvi. 4, 5, there is the warrant of scripture example for reporting to all the churches what relates to the interests of all. The working of this principle is essential to the orderly and confidential communion of churches.

The duties of churches to the world consist chiefly of what relates to promoting their salvation, and should originate in deep concern for them in their perishing condition—"heaviness and continual sorrow" on account of their unbelief, and intense desire to win them to Christ. But in order to gain the world to the truth, churches must themselves be separate from the world, and appear as consistent followers of Christ. There is not a more effectual device of the devil for deceiving and destroying souls, than in professors of the gospel being so conformed to the world as to lead the world to suppose that there is no difference between themselves and the church. Such are not a blessing but a curse—not the means of salvation

but occasions of stumbling and destruction,—a "woe to the world because of their offences." The world must be shewn by the consistency of real life, that there is cause for being turned from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. By what is stated in Phil. ii. 16. 1st. Thes. i. 8. and other passages, every church is required to be "holding forth the word of life," and making "the word of the Lord to sound out from among them" to every place to which they have access, which may be done by appointing every well qualified member to preach the gospel, and others to teach Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes, while all endeavour to propagate truth by conversation, and the circulation of religious tracts; taking a special interest in what is intended for the conversion of the posterity of the church. *Dr. Reid's narrative of the state of religion in Wycliffe chapel, London,* shews an admirable sample of a working church, and every church not working so for God, is under spiritual decay.

But churches should also co-operate in promoting the salvation of a lost world by supporting the *Congregational Union.* This plan of co-operation is both warranted and required by the example of the working of the principle of concentration of means for promoting the common good, shewn in the appointment of messengers to the churches to collect and apply their contributions for a given end (1st. Cor. xvi. 3; 2nd Cor. viii. 23), and by the principle of all the churches being under obligation to contribute for extending the gospel, as appears from Paul complaining of some churches having been wanting in this duty—Phil. iv. 15. This is a special branch of the fellowship by which their holy sympathies and means are concentrated in, "striving together for the faith of the gospel," and by which, much more is done than could be effected by individual exertion. But the "Messengers" chosen to form the Union, have nothing to do

with the government of the churches, having been only appointed as a Home Missionary Society, or medium of communication in aiding poor churches, and extending the gospel; and, as such, they should be liberally supported. There is much sin and shame in people giving only the *driblets* of their income to such a cause. If the Jews, on having to offer many costly sacrifices besides paying tithes, gave *much more than a tenth of their income* for religious purposes, it follows that christians, under greater obligations, and having much more to do in being required to evangelize a lost world, are bound to give more abundantly of the Lord's property committed to their trust, for doing the Lord's work:—always remembering that what they give, should be presented as "an offering to the Lord—an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God," Phil. iv. 18.

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## CONCLUSION.

The principles expounded in the foregoing pages, have led to the churches acting upon them, being called *Independent* and *Congregational*.

They are *Independent*, however, only in respect of government, being so exclusively dependant on Christ, subject to Him, and "complete in Him who is the head of all authority and power," that they are independent of all other government and power under heaven; but dependant on each other for the advantages of fellowship, and, as loyal subjects, dependant on "the powers that be" for the protection of their civil rights.

The designation *Congregational* is in reference to all the members of the congregation, or church united in fellowship, having an interest in its affairs, and admitted accordingly to do their part in the administration, by execut-

ing the laws of Christ as He hath appointed. A church may be Independent, as standing alone and free from extrinsic control, and yet not Congregational, if under the government of a Consistory, acting apart from the people, and consequently excluding them from doing their part in executing the laws of Christ.

The *Independent principle*, as now explained, provides for Christ holding His Supreme Headship and place to rule the church, without the intrusion of human power civil or ecclesiastical: and the *Congregational principle* provides for His people holding their place and rights in affording the obedience of enlightened freemen, to Christ himself in their midst, unhindered, unfettered, and uninterrupted, by the intrusion of any power whatever standing between the Head and His body the church. The churches of the *Congregational Union*, are, in the sense now explained, both *Independent and Congregational*. But the word *Apostolic* would be a more appropriate designation.

It is by the forementioned provisions for the body acting in union and communion with the Head Christ, subject to Him and dependant on Him only, and free from all foreign power or control, that this Apostolic plan is distinguished from all other forms of church government, in each of which there is some modification of political and compulsory power, which excludes Christ so far from His seat of government, and His people from free access to Him, to learn and to do His will in communion with Himself.

It is a remarkable and interesting fact, however, that many have adopted Apostolic principles *in part*, who, in other respects, continue to act, to a great extent, on the plan of compulsory policy.

The scripture plan is *Anti-patronage*, with success in freedom from all political power of control, whether civil or ecclesiastical. But many who have cast off the yoke

of *lay-patronage* willingly submit to the *veto of clerical-patronage*, leaving themselves bound neither to call nor ordain a minister over them, without permision and appointment of the church court exercising this power of patronage.

It is *Independency* of all clerical as well as state power, yet many continue to lean on the one and to bow to it, after having abandoned the other.

It is *Non-intrusion* out and out, providing against the intrusion of bad people as well as bad ministers; and for the exclusion of both, when want of relation to Christ is proven. But many who hold the right of choosing their own ministers as a privilege of the first importance, take no interest whatever in forming the fellowship of the church, by taking part in receiving members, or putting away the wicked from among them.

It is the *Voluntary principle* in full length, extending to spiritual as well as pecuniary matters, affording full place and provision for the exercise of the enlightened and willing mind in all things; without which it is impossible to please or enjoy God. But there is room only for a partial and occasional exercise of this principle in its application to temporalities, when the people, convinced or not convinced, pleased or not pleased, must submit to their *representatives*.

It is *Religious liberty* in full and unfettered operation, —unity combined with liberty,—the liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free from every yoke of human bondage in religion, but can neither be used nor enjoyed by those who are subject to the will of men in things pertaining to God.

There is great inconsistency in being partly free and partly bound—partly voluntary and partly compulsory; but this arises from people having *learned in part* only; and it may be expected that those who have made some advances towards true religious liberty, in having em-

braced *the one end of some great principles*, will soon go the full length, on finding it necessary to receive "the whole counsel of God," in order to "*follow the Lord wholly.*"

For promoting this end, it will be well to take into consideration some of the great advantages resulting from acting on the Apostolic plan, which render it "worthy of all acceptation:"

1. It is intended and admirably fitted for "working out" personal salvation. The doctrine of "the cross is the power of God unto salvation," in respect of imparting and sustaining eternal life, by affording pardon, reconciliation, peace, hope, and assurance, before God. But the laws and privileges of the kingdom of Christ furnish the believer unto every good work. Paul understood it so in saying, "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear," Heb. xii. 28. It is here shewn that God cannot be served acceptably as He requires, but in the use of what pertains to His kingdom, and, consequently, the work of salvation will progress or be hindered in proportion as men improve or neglect these means of salvation.

2. In acting by Bible truth exclusively, there is preservation from the soul-spoiling influence of "the doctrines, traditions, and precepts of men," and scope for doing the will of Christ, and for enjoyment in doing his will, which cannot be found in any community where there is no liberty to tell an offence unto the church, or permission to the church to do as Christ hath commanded.

3. The spiritual and exclusive character of the Apostolic plan, as affording no provision and no accommodation for the carnal mind, is an antidote against the intrusion of false professors, and tends to maintain separation between the church and the world.

4. The wholesome working of the plan provides well for making manifest false professors, who have "crept in unawares," and for treating them in a way tending to undeceive and awaken them to repentance.

5. In having to take part in the administration,—watching, rebuking, receiving and putting away,—the members of the church have means of insight into human nature, of increase of knowledge, and of consequent spiritual improvement, not to be found under other circumstances.

6. In restricting the communion to "the saved," there is full place and scope for the confidence and practice of brotherly love, and for the consequent enjoyment of the "comforts of love," not attainable in mixed communion.

7. Subjection to scripture rule in all things, leads to the rejoicing of a good conscience in serving Christ, and delight in that law which is obeyed;—it also sustains a rational expectation of God's blessing in doing his will, and the hope of reward as promised, which no unscriptural proceedings can afford.

8. The perfect liberty and obligation of each to take part in repairing what he sees wrong, cuts off all occasion for murmuring, as, in doing so, one would declare his own sin in neglecting the use of means to rectify that of which he complained.

9. In being admitted to take their part in the administration, all the members are led to take a greater interest in the concerns of the church, which also provides better for promoting purity of communion, as "the whole church" must know better than the rulers, the true character of applicants.

10. The apostolic plan, which admits of calling no man master in religious service, is an effectual check against the inroads of clerical domination, of which many chur-

ches have had to complain, since they sold or abandoned their liberty and powers to their rulers, by substituting *representation for personal service and right of judgment to execute the laws of Christ.* In the plan of pastors having power to apply the law, which cannot be executed but by the church, there is a fair balance of power, which renders it impossible for rulers to exercise lordship over God's heritage. And, therefore, those who groan under clerical oppression of any kind have themselves to blame in having contributed to the making of the bands of their bondage, by adding their own power of execution to the ruling power of their ministers, rendered so irresistible by all those powers having been concentrated in the machinery of church courts. Were there nothing of the kind that is called "*a beast*" in the Apocalypse, there could be no rider. Were the people standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, none could impose on them the yoke of bondage. There is nothing wonderful or unaccountable in seeing rulers, in that lust for power which characterises our fallen nature, contending earnestly for the order of a Beast and its Rider, and setting at nought all claims in behalf of the rights of judgment and executive power of the people by saying, as did other great powers, "This people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed," John vii. 49. But there is something wonderful, indeed, in finding the people who are thus robbed and degraded, *loving to have it so*, which cannot be accounted for without supposing them kept in ignorance of their birth-rights. The right of the people to choose their own ministers has been asserted of late with great success. The next subject of *agitation* will be their right to execute the laws of Christ, which will promote a *second reformation*—a great moral revolution, by which the powers of antichrist will be brought down, to give place to the reign of Christ with his saints on the earth during the Millenium. This is

plainly shewn, where, in reference to the right of judgment having been previously "taken away, (as in all churches where the people are not allowed to express their judgment in the execution of law) it is said, "Judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." "But the judgment shall sit, and they" (the saints) "shall take away his dominion," namely, the dominion of antichrist, "to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him," Dan. vii. 22, 26, 27.

11. The apostolic plan of government in churches has also produced immense advantages to the world. The fair manifestation of religious liberty in churches, has ever been the pioneer—the breaker up of the way to civil liberty among the nations. The example of the Puritan churches of England, inspiring the community with rational views of the rights of mankind, and correct estimates of the use of moral rather than physical power in promoting reform, was followed with results of inestimable value, concerning which *Lord Brougham* has spoken in the following terms: "The Independents are much to be respected, indeed, for their numbers, but far more to be held in lasting veneration for the unshaken fortitude in which, at all times, they have maintained their attachment to civil and religious liberty; and holding fast by their principles, have carried to its utmost pitch, the great doctrine of *absolute toleration*,—men, to whose ancestors this country will ever acknowledge a boundless debt of gratitude, so long as freedom is prized among us;—for they, I fearlessly confess it,—they, with whatever ridicule some may visit their excesses, or with

whatever blame, others,—they, with the zeal of martyrs, the purity of early christians, the skill and courage of the most renowned warriors, obtained for England the free constitution she now enjoys."—*The Patriot.*

But the merits of the scripture plan have been greatly undervalued, by placing it on a level with other recognized forms of government. A popular author says:—"Observation and experience unite to confirm the writer in the opinion, that the proper end of church government may be attained in a high, if not satisfactory degree, under any of its recognized forms, provided that it be ministered by the hands of holy and single-minded men."

This is, in the first place, very objectionable, as making "observation and experience," rather than the divine testimony, the ground and rule of judgment in things pertaining to God. In natural science, experience leads to the discovery and establishment of truth; but in religion, truth is foremost and uppermost in producing all experience of the right kind. Nor can "observation" be admitted an arbiter in estimates of moral qualities, or of the relation of cause and effect, but on the principle of observing how far what is in question is the produce of the "incorruptible seed of the word," producing fruit after its own kind.

His "observation and experience" are also defective in respect of contemplating definitely "the proper end of church government," which has there are various ends intended by the scripture plan, as formerly explained; and it is easy to shew that the ends intended by God cannot be gained but by ways and means of his own appointment. The chief end is, "to glorify God;" but he is dishonoured, and not glorified, by every plan of unscriptural procedure, as amounting to rejection of his own laws and authority. He will not take the honour of the results of human contrivance preferred to his own laws.

Nor can any subordinate end of government be attained but by scriptural administration; for, in so far as scripture law is not obeyed, the results are not the ends God intended. The ends of the scripture plan are the restoration of the offender to favour by the church, when found penitent; or his exclusion by the church, if continuing impenitent—ends that are out of the question where the church is not consulted in the matter.

"Observation" also tells against the opinion of this observer, in respect of purity of communion being "attained in a high degree under any of the recognized forms of government," as it is notorious, that impurity prevails, more or less, where the voice of the people has no place in the administration. No doubt, much depends on the work being done by "the hands of holy and single-minded men." *But men are no farther truly holy than they serve God according to his word.* Rulers, however holy, can only do the work of rulers. Paul, though one of the holiest of men, and also clothed with apostolic authority, did not take upon him a burden which God had not laid on him, but commanded the church to execute the law of discipline, as their own department of service, when "gathered together."—1st Cor. v. 4, 5. It is not disputed, that some good ends of moral reformation might be effected by men acting as a *moral police* on some such principle as that of the administration of the laws of *Lycurgus*, but this would be quite a different matter from the results of the laws of love in a christian church.

Thus, it appears, that no proper end of church government can be attained, even in a low "degree," under any of its recognized forms, but that which is recognized as the "form of sound words" taught by the apostles; and, therefore, the opposite view is much to be regretted, as of very injurious tendency in reconciling all parties to all that is "of man" and not "from heaven" in their recognized forms of government, leaving them

subject to the corrupting influence of human devices, and depriving them of the influence of "the whole counsel of God," necessary to "following the Lord wholly." And this is further cause of very deep regret, as tending to perpetuate what has long divided christians, and prevent inquiry into, and those discoveries of the import of, divine truth, which would make the people of God of "one accord and one mind in serving him." The late movements in England toward union among all christians have been hailed with delight by all the friends of Zion. But the end contemplated cannot be gained by compromise of principle, to which no man can consent who has respect for his own conscience and character. Nor can unity be gained, or even sought, while all parties are taught to be reconciled to what divides them. The Bible teaches the more excellent way of attaining to unity, by all embracing what unites, as where it is written, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." Isaiah ii. 5. "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD to serve Him with one consent." Zeph. iii. 9.

It is here shewn, that the only way of attaining to "serve the Lord with one consent," is by "walking in the light of the Lord," and in order to see clearly and follow him who "is the light of the world," the mind must be purged from all opposing error. In reference to this it is written, "No man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled," Rev. xv. 8. Though the temple, or gospel church, which had been long shut on the earth of the beast, was opened by the reformation of the seventh trumpet, and accessible to all believers in Christ, the population were then, and are even now, so blinded by "the mystery of iniquity," that no man though believing the gospel, could enter into the temple, till the contents of the vials consisting of the manifestation of truth for excluding anti-

christian error, "were *fulfilled*" *in him*,—purging him to that healthy state of mind which disposes to prefer the worship of the temple to the worship of the beast. Error, therefore, must be exposed in connexion with the teaching of truth, in order to induce christians to become one in the truth and service of the temple.

Many reject the scripture plan, which may be easily accounted for, considering how prone human nature is to follow the multitude in what is popular, rather than scripture truth at the hazard of bearing the cross. The carnal mind, which is "not subject to the law of God," always prefers some creature power to trust and obey, to bearing the yoke of Christ, and can take no part in a spiritual administration in which it feels no interest. Many of the people of God, also make a wrong choice from the prejudices of early education, preventing their learning what pertains to the kingdom of God, not knowing what loss they entail on their souls by neglecting to learn and obey the will of Christ.

There are others who boast of being no slaves of prejudice, who appear the subjects of a morbid apathy, refusing to consider the question, expressing their dislike to controversy, and alleging, that subjects of this kind, rank with what they call the *lesser matters* or *non-essentials of religion* which may be modified to existing circumstances. But there is no warrant—no liberty, for modification of any thing pertaining to the government of Him whom we are commanded to "hear in all things whatsoever he shall say," Acts iii. 22. Nor is it safe to speculate on what may be assumed as *non-essential*. It is true that nothing is essential to acceptance with God, in the first instance, but faith in Christ. But those who believe in him are required to love and obey him in all things; and the neglect of what is reckoned *little*, may be *great enough* to prove want of love to Christ, and want of subjection to his authority, which are as essential to salvation

as faith in his sacrifice. "He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

There is yet another class, who avow their belief in the forementioned principles, as being scriptural and of good tendency, but neglect to act upon them. This is a *dreadful state of mind!*—a sample of the true spirit of the Pharisees, who "said and did not,"—a state of presumptuous rebellion against the known laws of Christ—a confession of truth not unto salvation, but condemnation, on the principle of him who knoweth the Lord's will without doing it, who is doomed to be "beaten with many stripes." People of this description select the habiliments of their religion, as they choose goods at market—*determined by what suits their taste—without any respect whatever to what God gives or commands.* And is there not a cause? There is a cause, and that cause is something more than the want of a willing mind. It is the want of experience of the saving power of the doctrines of the cross, which invariably make willing to obey Christ *in all things, all* who are under this influence.

It cannot be reckoned unnatural, at out of the way, to close this concluding section, by "a word of exhortation" to the churches acting on the principles advocated in the foregoing pages, whether Baptist or Independent*—

* The Baptists and Independents have a common interest in this subject, being already of one mind regarding the doctrines of grace—what constitutes a christian—the importance of purity of communion—the principles of the constitution, order, and fellowship of a christian church—and the obligation to hold the scriptures exclusively as the rule of faith and government in all things;—agreed about all that is essential to "dwelling together in unity." And when the difference between *sectarian union* and *christian unity* is *more fully considered*—when the principles of mutual forbearance are *better understood*—and when the obligations of christians to *walk and work together*, in so far as they are agreed, as a means of converting a lost world, are *truly*

whether in Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, or elsewhere.

In the first place, make this the subject of your careful study, and take into consideration its great importance as a reason for taking a lively interest in learning and applying it to use. It is God's gift of a kingdom containing provision for "working out salvation," and for promoting the praise and glory of Christ; and this cannot be learned at once. As relating to the *every day work* of disciples, it must be the subject of their *daily study*. It cannot be understood by viewing its parts separately in the abstract. "The effectual working in the measure of every part of the body" cannot be understood without knowing how all the parts are "fitly framed together." The administrations of a church cannot be understood, but as seen arising from, or required by the principles of its constitution. Nor can either be comprehended, without being seen as the produce of the power of the doctrines of the cross, producing the subjection of love to Christ in all things. It is, therefore, by learning of Christ, and practising what is learned, that his people "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," Rom. xii. 2; Mat. xi. 29; John vii. 17.

Those who have received the kingdom, are thereby laid under strong obligations to extend its interests, because:—

1. It was on this condition that God bestowed the kingdom to be extended by its own exertions. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened," Mat. xiii. 33.

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*felt*—(see John xvii. 20, 21)—the waters of strife give place to the law of love, constraining all to "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," "*striving together* for the faith of the gospel."

2. What is given for personal use must be imparted to others. "Freely ye have received, freely give," Mat. x. 8. Recommending the truth to others, is the natural consequence of having received it for salvation. John. i. 40—48; and iv. 28, 29; Acts. iv. 20.

3. This is required in order to be conformed to Christ, who strongly recommended the reception of his kingdom on all occasions, and "witnessed a good confession concerning it before Pontius Pilate." John xviii. 36, 37; 1st Tim. vi. 13.

4. It is required by the law of love, which cannot withhold from others what tends to the benefit of their souls.

5. Exertions of this kind are required for promoting the destruction of all that is anti-christian,* and for introducing the Millenium. In the second chapter of Daniel,

* Many understand the terms "antichrist," "the man of sin," and "the mystery of iniquity," as relating exclusively to Popery. It appears, however, that they relate to what is political and compulsory, apart from, as well as connected with, Popery. This is evident, from finding it said, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work," and "this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world"—2nd Thess. ii. 7: 1st John iv. 3. This was written long before Popery was known. It was further shewn that "the man of sin" could not be revealed till the pagan dynasty of Rome was taken out of the way, and that he would be the successor of that power, which took place more than 300 years before Popery was established, 2nd Thess. ii. 3—9. With this corresponds the view given in Dan. vii. 8, 20, where Popery is represented by the "little horn," which sprang up and supplanted three of the ten horns of the antichristian beast, previously in existence. Popery was, therefore, only the topstone or head of "the man of sin" which existed *long before*, and now exists, to a great extent *apart from* the seventh head of the antichristian beast. It consists of all that is political and compulsory "sitting in the temple of God and exalting itself above all that is called God or that is worshipped," by taking the place of Christ's laws and authority in the church—procuring that subjection to creature power which is due to God only, whether in Papal or Protestant churches. The correct view of this point is the key to the proper application of many clauses of prophecy.

it is shewn, that it will be by the exertions of the Church called "a stone not in hands," smiting "the iron and clay" of antichrist, that the whole will be broken and scattered to the winds, when "the stone which smote the image, will become a great mountain and fill the whole earth." Now, mark this:—the stone will not increase, but by its own work, smiting and removing what stands in the way of its enlargement; therefore, awake and work, as the Lord hath spoken. There has been a false modesty inducing to abstain from interference with people of other denominations, as if different sects stood towards each other as rival interests in commerce. But the case is vastly different, as the truth of God is intended for the benefit of all, and should be recommended for the common good, by all who know it. The smiting of "the sword of the Spirit," will only destroy what is destructive, and promote what pertains to salvation. This smiting will only break the bands of bondage, and set the oppressed free. By smiting of this kind during the last forty years, the "iron and clay" establishment of this county has been shaken to its foundations, and broken too—a large portion of its ministers and people having, by noble effort, obtained *freedom in part*, by casting off the yoke of state bondage. Those of them, not yet made free by the Son, because they have not received his testimony (John vii. 31, 32, 36,) and who are, therefore, not "*free indeed*," will be content to remain *as they are*—free from state control of the scriptural administration of Christ's kingdom;—for obvious reasons, determined to remain as *stationary* as Lot's wife in the consistency of a "pillar of salt." But those who have given their hearts to "follow on to know the LORD," will, sooner or later, go forward as they learn the mind of Christ in the scripture. May the LORD pour out his Spirit upon them, and bless them, as the instruments of a great moral revolution in the land. In other denominations, whole churches have

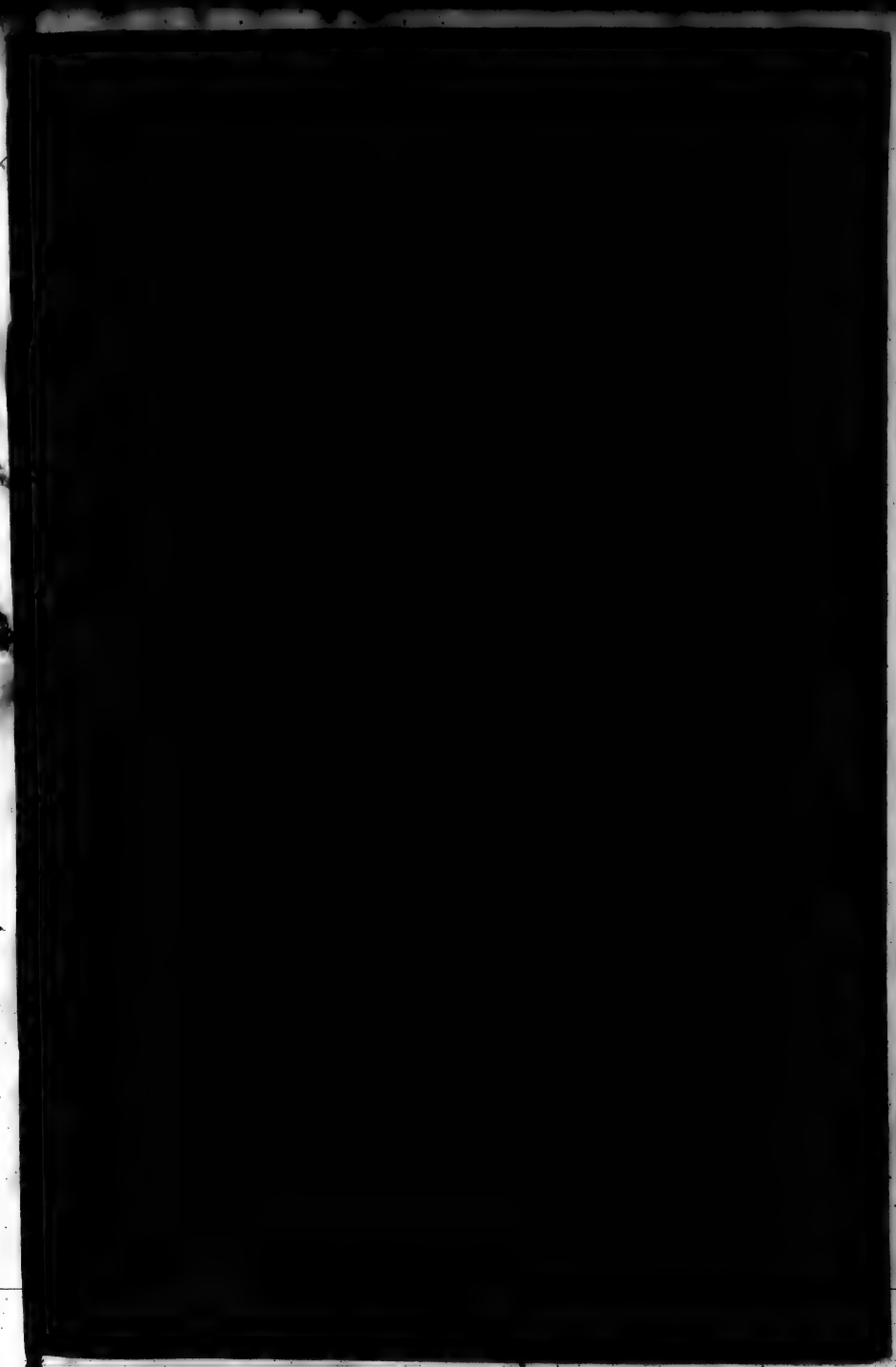
been led to cast away all that was political and compulsory, submitting to be ruled only by "God and the word of his grace." The proper knowledge of the gospel and kingdom of God, would lead all the churches in the land to do likewise.

It is a question of solemn bearing, how far short-coming what pertains to the kingdom of Christ in the land, may not be found charged to account against those who know the truth, without recommending it to their neighbours. But such teaching should be a labour of love, ministered with much "meekness of wisdom." There is much that calls for long-suffering and gentleness in this service. What we contend against, belongs to our fallen nature—is congenial to what is carnal in every one of us—and appeared prominently in the twelve disciples, when by seeking ascendency in contending "which of them should be greatest," and assuming a dispensing power in forbidding others to work without following them, while, also contemplating the use of the sword, they held what ultimately became the radical elements of the kingdom of antichrist! (Mat. xviii. 1—5; Luke ix. 49; Mat. xxvi. 51.) They were slow of heart to unlearn these things, and to "receive the kingdom of God as little children," which should teach us to exercise much patience towards those who *now are* as these disciples *once were*. "Let nothing," therefore, "be done through strife or vain glory." The angelic version of our motto is, "Glory to God in the Highest,—on earth, peace, good will towards men." Bitterness of spirit is the offspring and agent of error. Love is the fruit of the truth and the fruit of the Spirit; and it is by "speaking the truth in love," that God will bless it for good. In this spirit let us seek to win our brethren to the truth, by some such style of address as—'Friend, believe me, I intend you no harm but good. I observe certain things in your religion which are of bad tendency, standing between the soul and Christ, preventing

the performance of many important duties, and hindering the cause of God—things which Christ rebuked in his own disciples, and which, therefore, he cannot approve in you. Do take Christ's view of them and lay them aside. I have also found various things in the scriptures which the world hate and despise, but which I have proven to be gifts of Christ intended to "work out salvation," and very beneficial to my soul; and because I wish you the enjoyment of all that imparts happiness to myself, I cordially recommend them for your reception.' Such labours of love would not be in vain in the Lord. Let the churches of Christ awake and work, and may the Lord send prosperity. Amen.

THE END.

TORONTO: LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS.



the performance of many important duties, and hindering the cause of God—things which Christ rebuked in his own disciples, and which, therefore, he cannot approve in you. Do take Christ's view of them and lay them aside. I have also found various things in the scriptures which the world hate and despise, but which I have proven to be gifts of Christ intended to "work out salvation," and very beneficial to my soul; and because I wish you the enjoyment of all that imparts happiness to myself, I cordially recommend them for your reception.' Such labours of love would not be in vain in the Lord. Let the churches of Christ awake and work, and may the Lord send prosperity. Amen.

THE END.

TORONTO: LOVELL AND GIBSON, PRINTERS.

Injury done to the Holy Scriptures

reverence. But let even such, once unlearn those (I must so call them) unfortunate and hurtful associations, by which they have connected Divine truth with the mere costume in which man has chosen to present it, and they will set their seal to the substantial truth of what may now seem a baseless editorial fancy." . . . "The punctuation has cost him much; as has also something new in our Common Version, an attempt to distinguish spoken language by the usual signs of quotation. The old method of marking such language was imperfect, for it notified the reader of the beginning only of such language. But it is often matter of serious interest, to know where such language *ends*." In the New Testament there is the further improvement of printing, in Poetic form, the quotations from the Poetical parts of the Old Testament. Elsewhere in his preface Dr. Coit states:

"It seems to be a strange and mournful truth, that the best book under heaven should have been thrown into a shape specially ill-adapted for making it *attractive and easily understood*." Yet such is doubtless a literal fact with respect to the Holy Scriptures. For their divisions into chapters and verses, and the order of their various and numerous books, are now universally admitted to be purely the work, and, it may well be added, the fault, of man. I say the fault, since these divisions, how convenient soever for bare reference, have hindered multitudes from learning and feeling, and, more particularly, from *appreciating trains of thought and argument* in the Sacred Writers; and have made that *singular or mysterious*, which a natural and logical connection of passages would have rendered *reasonable, fitting and clear*.

"The common method of writing has always been to put single sentiments into sentences; a strain of sentiments into a paragraph; the discussion of a branch of a main topic into a section, chapter or book. And this common method is so obvious, that it can be comprehended and appreciated by the plainest minds. But the Bible, though it abounds in pieces of composition in which the closest connection prevails, has, for a long time, been cut up into chapters and verses, as if it were nothing but a string of aphorisms or independent propositions.

"It is not too much to say, that this treatment of the Bible has changed the style of preaching. Now, the religious teacher takes a single sentence and makes an oration upon it. In primitive times, (as the homilies of the Fathers show) it was customary to make an exposition of a considerable portion of Scripture; a method which, unquestionably, is generally more instructive and often more entertaining.

"Indeed, the Editor will venture to say, that the English reader, who will, for a few months, use his Bible in the shape here offered him, (*i.e.*, printed in paragraphs and parallelisms) *will prefer it ever after to any other*.

"All these observations, then, go to show the literal truth of the assertion of the Preface, that whatever Divine Truth may, in itself, be or have been, *the method of disposing, arranging and exhibiting it is the work of man*, and is therefore a fair subject for human attempts at improvement. No person, therefore, ought ever to object to any effort which may throw the Bible into such a shape that *its sentiments* (which are its essence, and have Divine authority) may be most *clearly apparent* and most *easily understood*."

The late JOHN BROWN, D.D., of Edinburgh, in his "Expository Discourses on the first Epistle of Peter," vol. ii. p. 279, remarks:—"The present division of the Holy Scriptures into chapters and verses is not of Divine origin, but is a human invention of comparatively late date, intended chiefly to facilitate reference to any particular portion of the sacred oracles. With the exception of the book of Psalms—the particular poems in which, as separate compositions, given forth at different times and on various occasions, were, from the beginning, divided from each other—all the books, both of the Old Testament and the New, were originally written as so many continued discourses; not only without paragraphs, but with the clauses, and even sentences,

undivided by such notes as we call points, and the words themselves not separated by any sensible distance from each other.

"The division of the Bible into the chapters, with which we are familiar, is comparatively a modern invention. It was made about the middle of the 13th century, by a cardinal of the Roman Church, Hugo de St. Caro, who formed the first concordance of the Latin Vulgate translation of the Scriptures, for the obvious purpose of facilitating reference to any particular word or passage. This division was adopted by a learned Jew Rabbi, Isaac Nathan, who, about the middle of the 15th century, published the first concordance of the Hebrew Scriptures; and, in addition, numbered the verses into which the sacred text had been anciently divided.

"About a century later, a learned French printer, Robert Stephens, divided the New Testament into verses; and his division, with few exceptions, and with very slight variations, has been generally adopted in the editions of the original text, and in the translation of the Scriptures, which have been since published throughout the Christian world.

"This division of the sacred text is convenient for the purpose of reference, and, had it been always judiciously made and accommodated to the different kinds of composition of which the sacred books are made up, might have contributed materially to the more important purpose of interpretation. Like all human works, however, it bears *abundant evidence of the imperfection* of its authors, and has been productive of some bad as well as of some good consequences. The division, whether of chapters or of verses, is not always judicious: where there is no pause in the discourse, no division in the thoughts, we often find a division in the words; while, on the other hand, *where the sense requires such a division, it is not always to be found.*

"To no part of the sacred writings does the division into chapters and verses less happily apply than to the epistolary writings of the New Testament. Both from their argumentative character and epistolary form, it becomes almost impossible to break them down into such short sections as our verses, without materially impairing their beauty and obscuring their meaning. It would be a considerable help towards the understanding of the apostolical epistles, if the chapters and verses were merely marked on the margin, while the epistle itself was printed as a continuous discourse, broken down only into such paragraphs as it naturally resolved itself into; and *indeed we are persuaded, nobody will ever make very satisfactory progress in the study of this most interesting portion of sacred writ, who does not get into the habit of reading it with an almost total disregard of the ordinary divisions.* . . . These may appear to some, very minute and unimportant remarks, and comparatively they are so, but *nothing should be considered as trifling or useless which goes to remove obscurity or pointlessness from an inspired declaration or precept; or to give it, even in a slight degree, additional clearness or force.*"

In 1848 the American and Foreign Bible Society published a Paragraph Bible. In the preface the Editor observes:

"The *Hebrew* is always printed in paragraphic form; and those editions of the *Greek Testament*, which follow the same plan, dividing the text into continuous paragraphs, and retaining the notation of Chapters and Verses in the margin for the purpose of reference, are by scholars now used altogether. Such are the advantages resulting from an arrangement of this kind, that it is suprising any other should ever have obtained.

"To meet some objections of men of taste; to transfer into the English Bible the arrangements of the Hebrew and Greek, and thus give those, who must necessarily read a translation, the same advantage the critic enjoys; and to do away a very common but erroneous impression, that the Bible is rather a collection of apothegms; or disconnected sentences, than composed of regular histories and treatises on religion, which have their separate topics and connexions;

—in a word, to present the *English reader* with the word of God, so arranged, that the injurious tendency of the divisions so universal in our English copies, may be counteracted; is the design of the present undertaking. For the subdivision of the books of Sacred Scripture into chapters and verses, without regard to sense, and frequently to its great injury, has thrown a most serious obstacle in the way of common readers. It is a method peculiar to the Bible, and confined to translations alone. Yet the Word of God is not deserving of such an injurious peculiarity as this."

MACKNIGHT, in gen. pref. to "Literal Translation of Apostolical Epistles," remarks: "In the new translation, the common division of the text into chapters and verses is retained, because the Scriptures have been long quoted according to that division. But, to remedy the *inconveniencies* which that division hath occasioned, by *breaking the text, sometimes even in the middle of a sentence*, the author hath prefixed to each chapter what he hath termed a *view and illustration*."

In 1841, Dr. Conquest issued his "Paragraph Bible according to the authorized version, with nearly *twenty thousand Emendations*." In this delightful work, he states he was engaged more than thirty years.

In 1820, John Jebb, A.M., published his able treatise, entitled "*Sacred Literature*; comprising a review of the principles of composition laid down by the late Robert Lowth, D.D., Lord Bishop of London, in his Prelections and Isaiah: and an application of the principles so reviewed to the illustration of the New Testament; in a series of critical observations on the style and structure of that Sacred Volume." The design of this work is "to prove, by examples, that the structure of clauses, sentences, and periods, in the New Testament, is frequently regulated after the model afforded in the Old." In this he has completely succeeded; and besides 100 examples of parallelism in the Old Testament, he gives illustrations of 187 from most of the books in the New Testament, in which are many others. Of these, eleven are from Revelation. On the style of the New Testament. Sec, V. p, 76. Jebb observes:—"Here we have been examining a mode of composition, applied almost exclusively to sacred subjects; admitting considerable varieties; and, in all those varieties, more or less prevalent throughout the entire Old Testament; a manner, alike perfect in the sublime ode, the tender elegy, and the didactic aphorism; carefully retained, by the most ancient translators of the Hebrew Scriptures; happily imitated, by a succession of Jewish writers, whose authority is all but sacred.

"Now, the question may be confidently asked, is it in any degree probable, that such a manner should have been abruptly and altogether discarded in the New Testament? Does not the very supposition run counter to all the analogies, afforded by the works of HIM who was the inspirer of both portions of the Sacred Volume? In the wide expanse of nature, there is no abruptness of transition. The forms indeed, and the colourings, are infinitely various; but so harmonically blended, and so nicely shaded off, that it is impossible to define, with accuracy, where one begins, and where another ends. And if this be so in God's inanimate works, shall we not much more expect the same keeping, the same congruity amidst variety, throughout his living word? In the latter, we cannot suppose that even the style and manner were fortuitous: design pervades the whole matter of both Testaments; and unity is the soul of that design; *but the matter and manner of Scripture are, beyond the matter and manner of any other body of writings, most intimately connected; so intimately connected, that unity of matter demands and implies, in this divine book, a correspondent unity of manner. And, on this ground alone, we may reasonably conclude, that a manner largely prevalent in the Old Testament, cannot be relinquished in the New.*

This question may, however, be regarded in another and a more popular light. Let us only consider what the New Testament is, and by whom it was written. It is a work suppletory to, and perfective of, the Old; composed under the same guidance that superintended the

composition of the Old; written by native Jews, Hebrews of the Hebrews; by men whose minds had, from infancy, been moulded after the form and fashion of their own sacred writings; and whose whole stock of literature (except in the case of St. Paul, and probably of St. Luke and St. James) was comprised in those very writings: now, surely, it is improbable in the extreme, that such men, when they came to write such a work, should, without any assignable motive, and in direct opposition to all other religious teachers of their nation, have estranged themselves from a manner so pervading the noblest parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, as the sententious parallelism. Of such an estrangement, no less can be said than this, that it would imply a constraint and pressure upon the natural movements of minds so disciplined and trained, altogether inconsistent with that ease, and freedom, and simplicity, which characterise the style of the New Testament, from its commencement to its close. While, with respect to HIM, who spake as never man spake, and who had all varieties of language at his command, it was so much his usage, in every allowable method and degree, to accommodate his manner to the tastes and prejudices of his countrymen, that his departure from it in this instance would have been perhaps a solitary departure; and, leaving out of consideration, for the present, the native and imperishable excellencies of the Hebrew parallelism, it is not easy to imagine a particular, in which our blessed Lord could have more safely become, like his great follower, to the Jews a Jew, than in the adoption of a manner, at once familiar to their understanding, agreeable to their taste, and consecrated by a thousand associations with their best and happiest religious feelings. In Section XXIV. p. 450, he states,—"All commentators have observed the striking resemblance between portions of the Apocalypse, considerable both in number and extent, and the prophetic books of the Old Testament: and, since the days of Bishop Lowth, some have, though slightly, adverted to the poetical imagery and structure of those resembling portions. The student who wishes rightly to apprehend, and to appreciate, the *language* of this last and most mysterious book of the sacred canon, will do well to compare attentively the several corresponding passages of it, and of the prophets; a comparison in which he will be materially assisted, by the marginal references, of a good quarto Bible, or of Gerard Von Maestricht's Greek Testament. And, if he wishes to institute the comparison yet more satisfactorily, he will reduce for himself the odes and songs of the Apocalypse to a versicular arrangement; and then compare the parallel passages of the prophets; consulting the metrically arranged versions of Bishop Lowth, Archbishop Newcome, and Dr. Blaney."

"The habit of observing such nicetics is far from trifling; everything is important which contributes to illustrate the *organization* of Scripture." Page 200.

In 1856 was published a new Translation of the Apocalypse of St. John, *metrically arranged*, by John H. Godwin. In the introduction the author says,—"The writer has endeavoured in this translation to present, as exactly as possible, both the meaning and the form of the original. That the one prophetical book of the New Testament is similar, in many respects, to the prophetical books of the Old Testament, must be at once seen; but the agreement is far more complete than is generally supposed. In the parallelism of the lines, the composition of the paragraphs, and the division and subdivision of the several portions into threes, the same orderly arrangement may be everywhere observed. The recognition of the poetic character of the Old Testament prophecies, and their presentation in the form of poetry, have contributed much to a correct understanding of their meaning, and to a just appreciation of their excellence; and it is hoped that the attempt here made may be of some similar service to the readers of this book."

JOHN LOCKE, author of "An Essay on the Human Understanding," in the Preface to his Paraphrase and Noontes the Epistles of St. Paul, after stating internal causes of obscurity, remarks, p. 7,—"To these we may subjoin two external causes, that have made no small increase to the native and original difficulties, that keep us from an easy and assured discovery of St. Paul's sense, in many parts of his epistles, and those are: *First*,—The dividing them into chapters and verses, as we have done; whereby they are so chopped and minced, and, as they are now printed, stand so broken and divided, that not only the common people take the verses usually for distinct aphorisms, but even men of more advanced knowledge, in reading them, lose very much of the strength and force of the coherence and the light that depends on it. Our minds are so weak and narrow, that they have need of all the helps and assistances that can be procured, to lay before them undisturbedly the thread and coherence of any discourse; by which alone they are truly improved, and led into the genuine sense of the author. When the eye is constantly disturbed in loose sentences, that by their standing and separation appear as so many distinct fragments, the mind will have much ado to take in, and carry on in its memory, an uniform discourse of dependent reasonings; especially having from the cradle been used to wrong impressions concerning them, and constantly accustomed to hear them quoted as distinct sentences, without any limitation or explication of their precise meaning, from the place they stand in, and the relation they bear to what goes before, or follows. These divisions also have given occasion to the reading these epistles by parcels, and in scraps, which has farther confirmed the evil arising from such partitions. And I doubt not but every one will confess it to be a very unlikely way to come to the understanding of any other letters, to read them piece-meal, a bit to-day and another scrap to-morrow, and so on by broken intervals; especially if the pause and cessation should be made, as the chapters the apostle's epistles are divided into, do end sometimes in the middle of a discourse, and sometimes in the middle of a sentence. It cannot therefore but be wondered that that should be permitted to be done to Holy Writ, which would visibly disturb the sense, and hinder the understanding of any other book whatsoever. * * * How plain soever this abuse is, and what prejudice soever it does to the understanding of the sacred Scripture, yet if a Bible was printed as it should be, and as the several parts of it were writ, in continued discourses, where the argument is continued, I doubt not but the several parties would complain of it, as an innovation, and a dangerous change in the publishing those holy books. And indeed, those who are for maintaining their opinions, and the systems of parties, by sound of words, with a neglect of the true sense of Scripture, would have reason to make and foment the outcry. They would most of them be immediately disarmed of their great magazine of artillery, wherewith they defend themselves and fall upon others. If the Holy Scriptures were but laid before the eyes of Christians, in its connexion and consistency, it would not then be so easy to snatch out a few words, as if they were separate from the rest, to serve a purpose, to which they do not at all belong, and with which they have nothing to do. But as the matter now stands, he that has a mind to it, may at a cheap rate be a notable champion for the truth, that is, for the doctrines of the sect that chance or interest has cast him into. He need but be furnished with verses of sacred Scripture, containing words and expressions that are but flexible (as all general obscure and doubtful ones are), and his system, that has appropriated them to the orthodoxy of his church, makes them immediately strong and irrefragable arguments for his opinion. This is the benefit of loose sentences, and Scripture CRUMBLED INTO VERSES, *which quickly turn into independent aphorisms*. But if the quotation in the verse produced were considered as a part of a continued coherent discourse, and so its sense were limited by the tenor of the context, most of these forward and warm disputants would be quite stripped of those, which they doubt not now to call spiritual weapons; and they would have often nothing to say, that would not show their weakness and

manifestly fly in their faces. * * * And perhaps, if it were well examined, it would be no very extravagant paradox to say, that there are fewer that bring their opinions to the sacred Scripture, to be tried by that infallible rule, than bring the sacred Scripture to their opinions, to bend it to them, to make it, as they can, a cover and guard to them. And to this purpose, *its being divided into verses, and brought, as much as may be, into loose and general aphorisms*, makes it most useful and serviceable. And in this lies the other great cause of obscurity and perplexedness which has been cast upon St. Paul's epistles from without. * * * After I had found, by long experience, that the reading of the text and comments in the ordinary way proved not so successful as I wished, to the end proposed, I began to suspect, that in reading a chapter as was usual, and thereupon sometimes consulting expositors upon some hard places of it, which at that time most affected me, as relating to points then under consideration in my own mind, or in debate amongst others, was not a right method to get into the true sense of these epistles. I saw plainly, after I began once to reflect on it, that if any one now should write me a letter, as long as St. Paul's to the Romans, concerning such a matter as that is, in a style as foreign, and expressions as dubious, as his seem to be, if I should divide it into fifteen or sixteen chapters, and read of them one to-day, and another to-morrow, &c., it was ten to one I should never come to a full and clear comprehension of it. The way to understand the mind of him that writ it, every one would agree, was to read the whole letter through, from one end to the other, all at once, to see what was the main subject and tendency of it: or if it had several views and purposes in it, not dependent one of another, nor in a subordination to one chief aim and end, to discover what those different matters were, and where the author concluded one, and began another; and if there were any necessity of dividing the epistle into parts, to make these the boundaries of them.

"In prosecution of this thought, I concluded it necessary, for the understanding of any one of St. Paul's epistles, to read it all through at one sitting; and to observe, as well as I could, the drift and design of his writing it. If the first reading gave me some light, the second gave me more; and so I persisted on, reading constantly the whole epistle over at once, till I came to have a good general view of the apostle's main purpose in writing the epistle, the chief branches of his discourse wherein he prosecuted it, the arguments he used, and the disposition of the whole.

"This, I confess, is not to be obtained by one or two hasty readings; it must be repeated again and again, with a close attention to the tenor of the discourse, and a perfect neglect of the divisions into chapters and verses. On the contrary, the safest way is to suppose that the epistle has but one business and one aim, until by a frequent perusal of it, you are forced to see there are distinct independent matters in it, which will forwardly enough show themselves. * * * But this muttering of lazy or ill-disposed readers hindered me not from persisting in the course I had begun; *I continued to read the same epistle over and over, and over again*, until I came to discover, as it appeared to me, what was the drift and aim of it, and by what steps and arguments St. Paul prosecuted his purpose. I remembered that St. Paul was miraculously called to the ministry of the Gospel, and declared to be a chosen vessel; that he had the whole doctrine of the Gospel from God, by immediate revelation; and was appointed to be the apostle of the Gentiles, for the propagating of it in the heathen world. This was enough to persuade me, that he was not a man of loose and shattered parts, incapable to argue, and unfit to convince those he had to deal with. God knows how to choose fit instruments for the business he employs them in. * * * All this, and a great deal more, necessary to guide us into the true meaning of the epistles, is to be had only from the epistles themselves, and to be gathered from thence with *stubborn attention*, and more than common application." p. 16.

With such indisputable illustrations of the poetry of the New Tes-

tament, it is remarkable that the Editor of the "Annotated Paragraph Bible, in the prefatory remarks on the New Testament, should state,—"The New Testament is all written in the Greek language, and is wholly in prose, although a few portions have some of the poetical rhythm of the ancient Hebrew."—It is much to be regretted that none of the Paragraph Bibles above alluded to, should have inserted in them any of the original Parallelisms contained in the New Testament but those set forth in Reeve's edition of 1802. These are in the Gospel by Luke, chapter i. 46th to the 55th, and 68th to the 79th verses; and in chapter ii. 29th to the 32nd verses. The only exception to this remark is the edition published in 1848, by the American and Foreign Bible Society, in which are a few of the parallelisms in Revelation. It is high time that those who love God's Word should see to it, that it is printed in the most appropriate manner.

HORNE, in "*Introduction*," vol. i. p. 215, Am. Ed., states.—"The verses into which the New Testament is now divided, are much more modern, and are an imitation of those invented for the Old Testament by Rabbi Nathan in the fifteenth century. Robert Stephens was the inventor, and introduced them into his editions of the New Testament; and the very great advantage it affords, for facilitating reference to particular passages, has caused it to be retained in the majority of editions of the New Testament, *though* MUCH *to the* INJURY *of its interpretation;* and *vice versa*. From this arrangement, however, Wetstein, Bengel, Boyer, Greisbach, Drs. Burton and Bloomfield, and other editors of the Greek Testament, have *wisely* departed; and have printed the text in continued paragraphs, throwing the numbers of Stephens into the margin."

KITTO, in *Bib. Cyc.*, vol. ii. p. 913, says,—"But as his (*i.e.*, Stephens') object was to adapt his division to his *Concordance*, without any reference to the sense, he unfortunately introduced a much worse division than he found in any of his models. And it is to be lamented that his 'wild and indigested' system, of breaking up the text into what appears to the eyes of the learned, and to the minds of the unlearned as so many detached sentences, (Michaelis' *Introd.*), has had a deleterious effect on the sense of Scripture, and perhaps given rise to some heresies."

DODDRIDGE, in pref. *Fam. Expr.* states:—"At present I shall only add, that daily experience convinces me more and more, that as a thousand charms discover themselves in the works of *nature*, when attentively viewed with glasses, which had escaped the naked eye, so our admiration of the *Holy Scriptures*, will rise in proportion to the accuracy with which they are studied."

The reader is referred to the above publications; also to KITTO'S *Bib. Cyc.*, Vol. II., articles "VERSE," page 905; and "SCRIPTURE (HOLY)," page 706. Also to Lowth's Isaiah, and Lectures on Hebrew Poetry; and to *Newcome on Minor Prophets*, Preface, page 38, whose words are,—"In the best editions of the Bible, the poetical parts should be divided into lines answering to the metre of the original. The common editions would be too expensive by such a distribution, which would occupy a large space: but this inconvenience may be avoided by placing each hemistich within inverted commas; or by any other proper mark of distinction for the pause."

The attention of Sunday School Teachers is earnestly requested to the advantages of the Poetical form, to facilitate committing to memory those parts of the Holy Scriptures.

The Supporters of those large publishing Bible Societies should require that they issue the Bible printed as it ought to be, in Paragraphs —the Poetical portions in Parallelisms.

Surely all who publish the Bible should aim with Dr. Conquest, to present it to the church and the world *restored*, as nearly as possible, to its original form.

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